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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

England...Chloe Kelly celebrates after scoring the winning goal in the final of the 2022 Women's European Championship

Uruguay...a Nacional fan wears a Luis Suarez mask after the striker returns to the club where he began his career

Brazil...the players of Copa Libertadores holders Palmeiras celebrate after beating Atletico Mineiro on penalties in this year's quarter-final

England...Erling Haaland performs his iconic celebration after scoring his first Premier League goal in a 2-0 win over West Ham

Germany...Bayern Munich pay tribute to former president Willi O. Hoffmann, who passed away in August at the age of 92, ahead of their Bundesliga clash with Wolfsburg

France...Lionel Messi watches his overhead kick loop over the Clermont Foot goalkeeper during Paris Saint-Germain's 5-0 win

Finland...Real Madrid celebrate winning their fifth UEFA Super Cup, drawing level with Barcelona's record

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FROM THE ASSISTANT EDITOR

In 2009, England women faced Germany in the final of the European Championship. It was a game watched by around 16,000 people in the stadium, and around 1.4 million on the BBC, as Germany ran out 6-2 winners. It was an event overlooked by many media outlets – this one included – while those that did cover it offered limited analysis.

Fast-forward 13 years, and the women's game is unrecognisable. This year's final took place in front of a sold-out Wembley crowd of 87,192 – the biggest-ever crowd at any Euros match, men's or women's – while a TV audience of almost 18 million watched Leah Williamson lift the trophy.

> This year's final took place in front of 87,192 – the biggest-ever crowd at any Euros match

And it was not a one-off. Earlier this year, Barcelona Femeni broke more attendance records en route to the Champions League final; Italy's Serie A recently turned fully professional, while a Wembley friendly between the European champions and USA, announced shortly after the final, sold out in hours.

The evidence is clear: women's football is on the up. Detractors remain, but any suggestion of a lack of quality in women's football should have been laid to rest by the high technical and tactical level on show this summer. The various stories of players' amateur beginnings are a reminder that, with increased professionalisation, the quality can only improve.

Every forward step that is taken by women's football should be welcomed by all football fans; with more high-level football, more iconic role models and more inspiration for young people, the world's favourite sport can get even better.

In our first issue since the conclusion of an historic tournament, we summarise the women's Euros in full.

Jamie Evans, Assistant Editor

Al Bayt Stadium...the ground will host the first match

QATAR

Change of date for World Cup kick-off

The 2022 World Cup will begin a day earlier than planned, with Qatar v Ecuador brought forward. Originally, Senegal and Netherlands were set to kick off the tournament, with the hosts beginning their campaign in the third match. But the home nation will now take centre stage on Sunday, November 20.

The decision was also influenced by a request from CONMEBOL. The South American confederation is still not certain of its representatives in the World Cup, with the Chilean FA (FFC) believing that they should replace Ecuador due to the fielding of an ineligible player during qualifying.

Although FIFA dismissed the case, the FFC have threatened to take the case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. As it stands, it may not just be the date of the opening fixture that changes, but possibly the identity of one of the teams as well.

FRANCE

No Messi in Ballon d'Or shortlist

The candidates for this year's Ballon d'Or awards have been announced by its organisers *France Football*.

For the first time since 2005, Lionel Messi has been left off the 30-man list of nominees, with Karim Benzema the overwhelming favourite for the top prize. Meanwhile, in the women's award, three of England's Euro 2022-winning squad have been nominated.

"Professional football in South Africa and Africa could be at risk…There is no evidence that an African Super League will benefit soccer in Africa"

South African Football Players Union on the proposed African Super League

2022 BALLON D'OR NOMINEES

- Trent Alexander-Arnold *(Liverpool, England)*
- Karim Benzema *(Real Madrid, France)*
- Joao Cancelo *(Manchester City, Portugal)*
- Casemiro *(Manchester United, Brazil)*
- Thibaut Courtois *(Real Madrid, Belgium)*
- Kevin de Bruyne *(Manchester City, Belgium)*
- Luis Diaz *(Liverpool, Colombia)*
- Fabinho *(Liverpool, Brazil)*
- Phil Foden *(Manchester City, England)*
- Erling Haaland *(Manchester City, Norway)*
- Sebastien Haller *(Borussia Dortmund, Ivory Coast)*
- Harry Kane *(Tottenham, England)*
- Joshua Kimmich *(Bayern Munich, Germany)*
- Rafael Leao *(Milan, Portugal)*
- Robert Lewandowski *(Barcelona, Poland)*
- Riyad Mahrez *(Manchester City, Algeria)*
- Mike Maignan *(Milan, France)*
- Kylian Mbappe *(Paris Saint-Germain, France)*
- Sadio Mane *(Bayern Munich, Senegal)*
- Luka Modric *(Real Madrid, Croatia)*
- Darwin Nunez *(Liverpool, Uruguay)*
- Christopher Nkunku *(RB Leipzig, France)*
- Cristiano Ronaldo *(Manchester United, Portugal)*
- Antonio Rudiger *(Real Madrid, Germany)*
- Mohamed Salah *(Liverpool, Egypt)*
- Bernardo Silva *(Manchester City, Portugal)*
- Son Heung-min *(Tottenham, South Korea)*
- Virgil van Dijk *(Liverpool, Netherlands)*
- Vinicius Junior *(Real Madrid, Brazil)*
- Dusan Vlahovic *(Juventus, Serbia)*

2022 BALLON D'OR FEMININ NOMINEES

- Selma Bacha *(Lyon, France)*
- Aitana Bonmati *(Barcelona, Spain)*
- Millie Bright *(Chelsea, England)*
- Lucy Bronze *(Barcelona, England)*
- Kadidiatou Diani *(Paris Saint-Germain, France)*
- Christiane Endler *(Lyon, Chile)*
- Ada Hegerberg *(Lyon, Norway)*
- Marie-Antoinette Katoto *(Paris Saint-Germain, France)*
- Sam Kerr *(Chelsea, Australia)*
- Catarina Macario *(Lyon, United States)*
- Beth Mead *(Arsenal, England)*
- Vivianne Miedema *(Arsenal, Netherlands)*
- Alex Morgan *(San Diego Wave, United States)*
- Lena Oberdorf *(Wolfsburg, Germany)*
- Asisat Oshoala *(Barcelona, Nigeria)*
- Alexandra Popp *(Wolfsburg, Germany)*
- Alexia Putellas *(Barcelona, Spain)*
- Wendie Renard *(Lyon, France)*
- Trinity Rodman *(Washington Spirit, United States)*
- Fridolina Rolfo *(Barcelona, Sweden)*

The month in numbers

Eye-catching facts and stats from the world of football this month…

€686m

Potential value of women's football by 2033, according to a recent report by UEFA.

£62m

Total price – including add-ons – of Marc Cucurella's transfer from Brighton to Chelsea, a world record for a full-back.

4

FIFA ranking of England's women's side, after the Lionesses won the European Championship.

€50,000

Fine handed to Fenerbahce by UEFA after the club's fans were heard chanting Vladimir Putin's name during their Champions League qualifier.

34

Of the last 67 UEFA trophies have now been won by Spanish clubs, after Real Madrid defeated Eintracht Frankfurt in the Super Cup final.

3

Brazilian teams in the semi-finals of this year's Copa Libertadores, with clubs from Brazil having won the last three editions of the tournament.

20%

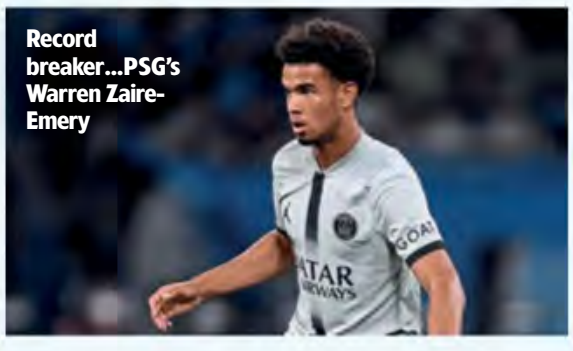
Pay-cut required by Bordeaux players after the club's recent financial travails.

$11.6m

Reward for the winners of the African Super League, which CAF say will launch in 2023-24.

16

Years, 4 months and 29 days, the age of Warren Zaire-Emery when he became PSG's youngest ever player in their clash with Clermont.



Record breaker…PSG's Warren Zaire-Emery

2025

New contract signed by Borussia Dortmund youngster Jamie Bynoe-Gittens, shortly after the English 18-year-old scored his first Bundesliga goal in the 2-1 win over Freiburg.

***Wunderkind…* Dortmund's English forward Jamie Bynoe-Gittens**

2

Doping bans given out by FIFA: one to El Salvador forward Erick Alejandro Rivera and another to Sabri Ali Mohamed of Djibouti, with both players testing positive for banned substances during World Cup qualifying.

221

Days in Antoine Griezmann's La Liga goal drought, after the French forward netted in Atletico's first league game of the season.

9

Years since Neymar's transfer to Barcelona from Santos. In October, he will face trial in Spain for alleged irregularities in the move.

81,365

Capacity for Champions League matches at Borussia Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park after UEFA agreed to trial safe standing in this season's competition.

4

National federations that have received FIFA bans in 2022, after India were suspended due to "undue influence from third parties," stopping them hosting the Women's U17 World Cup.

1

The Eredivisie's transfer window will close one day earlier (August 31) than the rest of Europe's top-flight leagues after an admin error by the Dutch league.

Keir RADNEDGE
THE INSIDER

Uruguayan history v Iberian modernity in 2030 World Cup hosting bid

Strolling half an hour from downtown Montevideo brings any inquiring tourist to a quirky grey post on the sidewalk at a crossroads in the suburb of Pocitos. Further down the Calle Coronel Alegre stands a grey angular frame, like a half-completed bus shelter.

No city wears its footballing pride like Montevideo. The post marks the spot where France and Mexico kicked off on the first day in the history of the World Cup; the steel frame represents the goal into which Frenchman Lucien Laurent struck the first goal.

Just about every football romantic and historian knows, in his or her heart, that the finals of the 2030 World Cup should return to the city in which it all began a century earlier. But while Uruguayan football fanaticism has not changed, the world has moved on.

This is why leaders of a bid from Spain and Portugal believe they should be favourites when FIFA Congress votes in 2024. They boast their own grand history in the game and equally iconic venues. The Uruguayans would love to have gone it alone to claim "their" centenary finals but that was never an option.

Uruguay has long considered the 2030 World Cup its holy grail, even though the World Cup has outgrown Uruguay: from 13 teams in 1930 to 16 in 1934, 24 in 1982, 32 in 1998 and now 48 from 2026.

This is the reason why the Uruguayans, reluctantly, are teaming up with neighbouring Argentina – their opponents in the first final – plus Chile and Paraguay to bid for 2030. The political scrap for votes will be intense and the outcome too close to call.

Uruguay have been bending

1930 final host...the Estadio Centenario in Montevideo

ears on the subject for almost a decade. Julio Grondona, then the president of the Argentine Football Association and FIFA's Argentinian finance chairman, began talking up another home continent World Cup in 2013, a year ahead of Brazil's staging (and his own sudden death). It was like whistling in the wind. Only Uruguay was interested and the prospect of a joint bid with Argentina looked slim as Buenos Aires politicians blew hot and cold.

The most threatening rival appeared to be China, whose newly-enriched companies were queuing up to be World Cup sponsors and curry financial favour with Gianni Infantino's FIFA. The state presidents of Uruguay and Argentina agreed to launch a feasibility study, provoking UEFA supremo Aleksander Ceferin to warn that they were wasting their time: 2030 would be Europe's turn to welcome the world.

Uruguay and Argentina reacted by roping in Paraguay and then Chile to join their party. Morocco, losers with a record sequence of five bids, including 2026, revived the fantasy of an African hosting. European FAs, alerted by Ceferin, considered throwing their own hats into the ring. England and Spain were talked up. Morocco even cosied up to Madrid before being gently warned off by UEFA.

In due course political pressure led Spain to partner with Portugal, while England ultimately settled for the near-certainty of a role as senior partner in a UK and Ireland staging of Euro 2028.

As for China? Out of the picture by then. As quickly as the nation had rocketed into view by raiding the world transfer market, so it crashed to earth. Suddenly football was no longer flavour of the month or year or even decade with President Xi.

So the serious line-up for 2030 is Spain and Portugal versus Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The Iberian neighbours are still bitter at the manner in which they were outmanoeuvred, not least by

History...Montevideo's 1930 World Cup tribute

the then-FIFA president Sepp Blatter, in the scandal-battered bidding for 2018. The partnership lost 13-7 to Russia in the second round of voting by the FIFA executive committee.

Spain and Portugal have already published a long list of 15 potential Spanish venues, planning for an eventual 11 plus three in Portugal.

Here Uruguay & Co still have plenty of work ahead. All four nations will expect matches in their capitals, at least. Uruguay's Centenario is an historic national monument but is not up to modern World Cup standards. Possibly a temporary upgrade could serve for a symbolic opening match with the final across the River Plate in Buenos Aires; a stark comparison with the magnificently redeveloped Santiago Bernabeu or Camp Nou.

On the face of it the financial and political clout of Spain and Portugal should take some beating. After all, UEFA can proffer 55 votes while South America's CONMEBOL brings only ten to the table. But with FIFA politics what you see is most definitely not what you get.

For example, does Europe really need the World Cup in 2030? It already boasts the Champions League, the real sporting pinnacle of the modern game, and also lays claim to an estimated 93% of the worldwide game's wealth. The issue could prove a major debating factor as the race to 2030 gathers pace.

Uruguay & Co will expect support not only from CONMEBOL, but also from its CONCACAF neighbours to the north, in the same TV time zone (thinking prime-time advertising slots). That means a further 41 votes. Africa, an unofficial client state of FIFA, will vote whichever way president Gianni Infantino suggests and, given that there is no love lost between FIFA and UEFA, much of Africa may thus follow the South American option. That adds up to 54 more votes for a maximum of 105.

FIFA membership is a tantalising 211, meaning a simple majority of 106.

The balance of power may thus rest in Asia and little Oceania. But it would take the improbable unanimity of all their 60 members in addition to UEFA's 55 to carry Spain and Portugal across the line instead of Uruguay & Co.

Alejandro Dominguez, the CONMEBOL president and current FIFA finance chair, is a worried man. He wants to swerve the battle, telling a press conference: "100 years is an anniversary that will only happen once. The World Cup must come home. We believe this is more than enough reason for FIFA to accept this application and even make it the only one."

Politically speaking, this could go to extra-time and penalties.

> Every football romantic and historian knows that the finals of the 2030 World Cup should return to the city in which it all began a century earlier

BOOKS THIS MONTH

TEN BIG EARS
By Aly Mir (Pitch Publishing, £16.99)

Ten Big Ears is a personal account that commemorates the 30th anniversary of Barcelona's first European Cup win in 1992. It is a fascinating story of some of the greatest football the world has ever seen, including all five of the club's European Cup triumphs. Drawing on wider historical and cultural references (including philosophy, classical antiquity, religion, reality TV and popular music) this provides an alternative and quirky take on the rollercoaster that is Barca.

HERO IN THE SHADOWS
By David Tossell (Pitch Publishing, £19.99)

Over a three-decade period, and as right-hand man to three England managers, Don Howe won acclaim from many of England's finest players as a genius of the coaching profession. Through interviews with players, colleagues, friends and family, this book examines the triumphs of his career and assesses his contribution to English football.

Jonathan WILSON
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Manchester City's Champions League gamble

For Manchester City, the risk is significant. They have won four of the last five league titles, topping the Premier League's scoring charts in each of those five seasons, with a system that works extremely well. Yet this season they have chosen to change it.

City have not won a Champions League, and that is the trophy their owners really crave. They have developed a habit of eye-catching exits, dominating games yet somehow never scoring quite enough, while opponents turn bafflingly ruthless at key moments. None of the Champions League winners in the past five seasons have been notably more talented than City.

The temptation may have been to write off those failures – albeit they follow a pattern of disappointment for Pep Guardiola in the Champions League – as a matter of misfortune and to assume that carrying on playing the same (successful) way would eventually prevail. But they have not. The signing of Erling Haaland means a major change of approach, presumably in an attempt to make City more ruthless in those key games.

There is, lurking in the background, a wider point here, which is that there is a material difference in what is effective in the biggest games and what works in the vast majority of league games. That's meant a major problem for Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern and Juventus over the past decade, but it's now beginning to become a problem for the likes of City as well. Beating Burnley or Bournemouth requires a very different skillset and approach to beating Real Madrid or even Liverpool.

"Axis of anarchy"... Erling Haaland and Jack Grealish

City's purchase of Jack Grealish last summer was out of character. It broke their transfer record and brought in a dribbler with a strong streak of independence. The suggestion was that it was an attempt to add an element of unpredictability to City's polish. Haaland is not unpredictable but his directness gives City a very different option. In the Community Shield it was notable how often he made runs that would surely have led to chances if a midfielder had been prepared to simply knock the ball into his path.

> City's entire method has been based on order and control. Now, in Haaland and Grealish, they have an axis of anarchy

Everybody accepted that there would be a period of adaptation while he got used to City, but it became apparent that the adaptation needed to be two-way, that City needed to be prepared at times to play the ball forward quickly, to risk losing possession. That came on the opening week of the Premier League season against West Ham, when Kevin De Bruyne in particular seemed to revel in playing in Haaland, who scored twice, one a penalty from a move in which he had played a major role.

But Haaland's greatest value may be less in games against the likes of West Ham, who tend to sit deep, limiting the opportunities to play him into space behind their defensive line. The majority of Premier League teams sit deep against City. Haaland will probably still score plenty against them, but where he offers something different is against better teams who press against City.

There are few of them, and opponents who play in that way risk taking a significant beating, but it's significant that Jurgen Klopp and Antonio Conte both have positive records against Guardiola (Klopp with 11 wins in 25 meetings, Conte three in five): if you have the level of player and the organisation to press City

they can be rattled. But if you press, there will necessarily be space left behind your defensive line. And there is probably nobody in world football so capable of exploiting that as Haaland.

City had got themselves into a situation in which they had to control games in order to win them; they will continue to dominate the majority of games they play and Haaland should make them more efficient in turning that dominance into victory, but he also gives them the opportunity of burgling a goal out of nowhere.

But that difference also represents a risk. City's entire method has been based on order and control. Now, in Haaland and Grealish, they have an axis of anarchy. It may be that the tension between their individuality and the system sparks an even higher form of football, just as Lionel Messi gave a dash of individual brilliance to Guardiola's Barcelona.

But Guardiola can struggle to deal with mavericks and this, as a result, is a risk. He is amending his vision of football, and using a very headstrong footballer to do it. It could produce astonishing football and win the Champions League at last, but the potential for meltdown is there as well.

Change of plan...Guardiola has adjusted his tactics to accommodate Haaland

REPORTS WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

Rubbing shoulders... Daniele Mannini (left) and his then-Sampdoria team-mate Antonio Cassano

1 NON-LEAGUE A-LISTERS

The lower reaches of the English football pyramid has seen not one, but two remarkable signings in recent weeks. Former Czech Republic international Daniel Pudil, who won 35 caps while playing for the likes of Genk, Watford and Sheffield Wednesday, joined ninth-tier side Hallam FC, while in the tenth tier, Beverley Town have signed a former Serie A midfielder. Daniele Mannini played for Brescia, Napoli and Sampdoria before moving to east Yorkshire to work as a sales executive. "I was out walking my dog when I got chatting to another dog walker," explained Beverley chairman Mark Smith. "He happened to say he played a bit of football in the past, I told him I was the chairman of Beverley Town and he should get down to pre-season training – little did I know he had over 200 Serie A appearances under his belt!"

2 DARK ARTS MASTER

Fans of footballing chicanery, pay attention: Dani Olmo has a new trick in his locker. During the German Super Cup final, the RB Leipzig winger ran the ball towards the corner, stopping just as he reached the touchline, before jogging away as if he'd miscontrolled the ball. Bayern Munich defender Lucas Hernandez, assuming it was his side's throw-in, picked the ball up and thereby conceded a free-kick for a hand-ball. Bayern players were furious, but they had the last laugh, lifting the trophy with a 5-3 win.

3 ROBERT LEANDOSKI

Barcelona are a club facing a myriad of issues at the moment, so problems inside the Camp Nou club shop may not be top of their list of priorities. Still, the signing of Robert Lewandowski has given staff a headache. A video on social media shows a customer inside the official store asking why he can't have a shirt with Lewandowski on the back. "We don't have the letter 'W'," a member of staff explains. "Because [Lewandowski] has two 'W' in his name, we run out."

4 STAND DOWN

Southend United have been forced to rename one of their stands after a sponsorship deal saw the new name include one of Britain's most notorious serial killers. After partnering with local estate agents Gilbert & Rose, the National League side renamed one section of their Roots Hall Stadium the "Gilbert & Rose West Stand". Rose West is currently serving a whole-life term after being convicted of a series of murders with her husband Fred. The football club said it was talking to the sponsor about a "different arrangement of words".

5 TOP TOFFEE

Everton's pre-season friendly with Dynamo Kyiv ended with a truly nice touch. Toffees fan Paul Stratton had been helping victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine by driving to the Ukrainian-Polish border to deliver supplies to refugees, and the club rewarded him by bringing him on in the final moments of the match to take a penalty. In front of the Gwladys Street End, Stratton tucked the ball away and duly celebrated by knee-sliding in front of the home fans.

6 HE DID NOT TEA THAT COMING

Finally, an early contender for the football photograph of the season (below) from Scottish side Elgin City. The club's photographer was on hand to capture the exact moment that an unsuspecting fan was struck by a ball, sending his cup of tea everywhere.

Photo of the year...Elgin fan is struck
Credit: @ElginCityFC

"Enough of African players, or they should give up playing in the African Cup of Nations. I won't be buying them any more otherwise. We pay the salaries to send them around to play elsewhere"

Napoli president Aurelio de Laurentiis sparked controversy with his comments on AFCON

IN PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

SUMMER 2022 LATEST MAJOR TRANSFERS

Record-breaking... Marc Cucurella

Debut goal... Ademola Lookman

Leicester legend... Kasper Schmeichel

Barca new boy... Jules Kounde

Welcome back... Timo Werner

£55m	Marc Cucurella	Brighton to Chelsea
£51m	Casemiro	Real Madrid to Man. United
£48.3m	Lisandro Martinez	Ajax to Man. United
£45m	Jules Kounde	Sevilla to Barcelona
£38m	Matheus Nunes	Sporting to Wolves
£35m	Morgan Gibbs-White	Wolves to Nott'm Forest
£33m	Amadou Onana	Lille to Everton
£30m	Gianluca Scamacca	Sassuolo to West Ham
£30m	Oleksandr Zinchenko	Man. City to Arsenal
£27.5m	Goncalo Guedes	Valencia to Wolves
£26.8m	Charles De Ketelaere	Club Brugge to Milan
£21.8m	David Raum	Hoffenheim to RB Leipzig
£21m	Arnaud Kalimuendo	PSG to Rennes
£20m	Emmanuel Dennis	Watford to Nott'm Forest
£20m	Carney Chukwuemeka	Aston Villa to Chelsea
£20m	Dwight McNeil	Burnley to Everton
£18m	Timo Werner	Chelsea to RB Leipzig
£17.5m	Maxwel Cornet	Burnley to West Ham
£16.9m	Tanguy Nianzou	Bayern Munich to Sevilla
£16.8m	Arthur Theate	Bologna to Rennes
£16.8m	Nahuel Molina	Udinese to Atletico Madrid
£16.8m	Mathys Tel	Rennes to Bayern Munich
£16.8m	Destiny Udogie	Udinese to Tottenham
£16.4m	Kim Min-jae	Fenerbahce to Napoli
£15.1m	Pervis Estupinan	Villarreal to Brighton
£14.9m	Issa Diop	West Ham to Fulham
£13.9m	Brian Brobbey	RB Leipzig to Ajax
£13.5m	Nordi Mukiele	RB Leipzig to PSG
£12.8m	Dodo	Shakhtar to Fiorentina
£12.7m	Mohamed Camara	RB Salzburg to Monaco
£12.7m	Mikkel Damsgaard	Sampdoria to Brentford
£12.7m	Orel Mangala	Stuttgart to Nott'm Forest
£12.6m	Marcos Senesi	Feyenoord to Bournemouth
£12.6m	Ademola Lookman	RB Leipzig to Atalanta
£12.6m	Renato Sanches	Lille to PSG
£12m	Cesare Casadei	Inter to Chelsea
£11.7m	Alexis Beka Beaka	Lokomotiv Moscow to Nice
£11m	Sergio Gomez	Anderlecht to Man. City
£10.9m	Mattia Viti	Empoli to Nice
£10.2m	Filip Kostic	E Frankfurt to Juventus
£10.1m	Thilo Kehrer	PSG to West Ham
£10m	Stanley Nsoki	Club Brugge to Hoffenheim
£10m	Marcus Tavernier	Middlesbrough to Bournemouth
£9.4m	Sekou Mara	Bordeaux to Southampton
£9.3m	Jordan Veretout	Roma to Marseille
£9m	Remo Freuler	Atalanta to Nott'm Forest
£8.5m	Sayha Seha	Troyes to Marseille
£8.5m	Chris Richards	Bayern Munich to Crystal Palace
£8.4m	Borja Mayoral	Real Madrid to Getafe
£8.4m	Junya Ito	Genk to Reims
£8.4m	David Okereke	Club Brugge to Cremonese
£8.3m	Gabriel Slonina	Chicago Fire to Chelsea
£8m	Perr Schuurs	Ajax to Torino
£6.8m	Jhon Lucumi	Genk to Bologna
£6.5m	Vedat Muriqi	Lazio to Mallorca
£6.4m	Kevin Mbabu	Wolfsburg to Fulham
£6m	Ozan Kabak	Schalke to Hoffenheim
£5.5m	Cyriel Dessers	Genk to Cremonese
£5m	Lucas Torreira	Arsenal to Galatasaray
£5m	Ike Ugbo	Genk to Troyes
£4.5m	Jorge Sanchez	America to Ajax
£4.2m	Miguel Gutierrez	Real Madrid to Girona
£3.8m	Anthony Modeste	Cologne to Dortmund
£3.8m	Luan Peres	Marseille to Fenerbahce
£3.5m	Marcus Forss	Brentford to Middlesbrough
£3.5m	Pierre Lees-Melou	Norwich to Brest
£3.4m	Ridvan Yilmaz	Besiktas to Rangers
£3.4m	Nicolas Tagliafico	Ajax to Lyon
£3m	Bernd Leno	Arsenal to Fulham
£2.7m	Enis Bardhi	Levante to Trabzonspor
£2.6m	Achraf Dari	Casablanca to Brest
£2.5m	Matthew Hoppe	Mallorca to Middlesbrough
£2.5m	Oscar Mingueza	Barcelona to Celta Vigo
£1.7m	Daniel Wass	Atletico Madrid to Brondby
£1.7m	Agustin Marchesin	Porto to Celta Vigo
£1m	Kasper Schmeichel	Leicester to Nice
£1m	Marc Bartra	Real Betis to Trabzonspor
£1m	Jasper Cillessen	Valencia to NEC
£450k	Mat Ryan	Real Sociedad to Copenhagen

FREE TRANSFERS

Aaron Ramsey Juventus to Nice
Alexis Sanchez Inter to Marseille
Artem Dzyuba Zenit to Adana Demirspor
Ben Mee Burnley to Brentford
Cesc Fabregas Monaco to Como
Cheikhou Kouyate Crystal Palace to Nott'm Forest
Dries Mertens Napoli to Galatasaray
Dwight Gayle Newcastle to Stoke
Isco Real Madrid to Sevilla
Ismaily Shakhtar to Lille
Joel Robles Real Betis to Leeds
Jordan Larsson Spartak Moscow to Schalke
Jose Callejon Fiorentina to Granada
Julian Baumgartlinger Bayer Leverkusen to Augsburg
Kiko Casilla Leeds to Getafe
Lys Mousset Sheffield United to Bochum
Matias Vecino Inter to Lazio
Neto Barcelona to Bournemouth
Oscar Melendo Espanyol to Granada
Riqui Puig Barcelona to LA Galaxy

"This stint at Real Madrid will end my career. After *Los Blancos*, I'll stop"

Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti discusses his future

LOANS

Aleksey Miranchuk Atalanta to Torino
Alex Collado Barcelona to Elche
Alex Telles Man. United to Sevilla
Ally Samatta Fenerbahce to Genk
Andrea Petagna Napoli to Monza
Andrea Pinamont Inter to Sassuolo
Angelino RB Leipzig to Hoffenheim
Arthur Masuaku West Ham to Besiktas
Carles Perez Roma to Celta Vigo
Conor Coady Wolves to Everton
Daniel Maldini Milan to Spezia
Destiny Udogie Tottenham to Udinese
Diego Lainez Real Betis to Braga
Ethan Laird Man. United to QPR
Folarin Balogun Arsenal to Reims
Georginio Wijnaldum PSG to Roma
Giovani Lo Celso Tottenham to Villarreal
Giovanni Simeone Verona to Napoli
Hamza Choudhury Leicester to Watford
Joe Rodon Tottenham to Rennes
Kayky Man. City to Pacos de Ferreira
Keinan Davis Aston Villa to Watford
Konrad De La Fuente Marseille to Olympiakos
Levi Colwill Chelsea to Brighton
Luca Pellegrini Juventus to Eintracht Frankfurt
Malang Sarr Chelsea to Monaco
Manor Solomon Shakhtar to Fulham
Marlon Shakhtar to Monza
Nahuel Ferraresi Man. City to Sao Paulo
Nico Gonzalez Barcelona to Valencia
Nikola Vlasic West Ham to Torino
Nuno Tavares Arsenal to Marseille
Pablo Mari Arsenal to Monza
Reinier Jesus Real Madrid to Girona
Ruben Vinagre Sporting to Everton
Santiago Ascacibar Hertha Berlin to Cremonese
Shane Duffy Brighton to Fulham
Tanguy Ndombele Tottenham to Napoli
Troy Parrott Tottenham to Preston
Valentin Castellanos New York City to Girona
Valentino Lazaro Inter to Torino
Viktor Kovalenko Atalanta to Spezia
Wesley Aston Villa to Levante
Wylan Cyprien Parma to Sion
Yan Couto Man. City to Girona
Yangel Herrera Man. City to Girona
Zinho Vanheusden Inter to AZ Alkmaar

EUROPE

Greek giants Olympiakos appointed former Huddersfield boss **CARLOS CORBERAN** as manager after sacking Pedro Martins for failing to qualify for the Champions League.

ASIA

Former Barcelona and Arsenal starlet **FRAN MERIDA** joined Chinese side Tianjin Jinmen Tiger from Espanyol. Shanghai Port signed **WU LEI**, one of the CSL's all-time top scorers, from Espanyol.

Saudi club Al-Shabab paid over £6m to sign Gabon international **AARON BOUPENDZA** from Qatar Stars League side Al-Arabi. Al-Ittihad signed **HELDER COSTA** on loan from Leeds United.

In the A-League, Sydney FC signed **JOE LOLLEY** from Nottingham Forest and Slovakian international **ROBERT MAK** from Ferencvaros. Elsewhere, **CARL JENKINSON** joined Newcastle Jets, also from Forest, and **DANIEL ARZANI** signed for Macarthur from Manchester City.

Former Arsenal academy product **JAY EMMANUEL-THOMAS** joined Indian Super League side Jamshedpur after leaving Aberdeen.

CONCACAF

MLS clubs raided the Premier League for new additions: **CHRISTIAN BENTEKE** joined DC United from Crystal Palace, Cincinnati signed USA international **MATT MIAZGA** from Chelsea, and **BRAIAN OJEDA** was loaned to Real Salt Lake by Nottingham Forest. Chicago Fire retained goalkeeper **GABRIEL SLONINA** on loan after selling him to Chelsea for $10m. Meanwhile, LAFC bought **DENIS BOUANGA** from Saint-Etienne.

Former Barcelona defender **DANI ALVES** joined Pumas Unam. Elsewhere in Mexico, Puebla signed USA striker **JOZY ALTIDORE** on loan from New England Revolution, Tigres signed Brazilian defender **SAMIR** from Watford, and Cruz Azul signed ex-Everton and Villarreal defender **RAMIRO FUNES MORI** from Al-Nassr.

A-League arrival... Joe Lolley

Eighth club... Dani Alves

SOUTH AMERICA

LUIS SUAREZ returned to Uruguay to join Nacional, the club where he began his professional career.

Botafogo signed former Porto and Olympiakos forward **TIQUINHO**, and Chile international **ERICK PULGAR** joined Flamengo from Fiorentina. Santos signed Venezuela winger **YEFERSON SOTELDO** on loan from Tigres.

JUAN REYNOSO was appointed coach of Peru's national team.

Homecoming... Luis Suarez

Appointments, sackings and loans

EUROPE

Former Arsenal defender **NACHO MONREAL** retired from football after leaving Real Sociedad.

SOUTH AMERICA

Corinthians released **WILLIAN** after one season, with the ex-Chelsea winger training with Fulham. Elsewhere, Palmeiras released defender **RENAN** after he was arrested for drink driving.

Retiring... Nacho Monreal

Released... Willian

"Uwe had one thing ahead of all the other players: his shot while falling, hitting the ball while his feet were at head height himself. I haven't seen that in any other player"

Brazil legend Pele on his admiration for Uwe Seeler

OBITUARIES

Germany legend... Seeler ahead of the 1966 World Cup

UWE SEELER
(1936-2022)

Uwe Seeler was one of the most inspiring of German football heroes. His career statistics are impressive enough but Seeler's enduring popularity owes much to his accidental status as a bridge across football eras.

"*Uns Uwe*" (Our Uwe) registered 43 goals in 72 appearances for West Germany between late 1954 and 1970, captaining the side for the last eight years, but was never a World Cup winner: "his" West Germany were fourth in 1958, quarter-finalists in 1962, runners-up in 1966 and third in 1970.

The closest he came to silverware was in 1966, when he captained the West German team that lost 4-2 after extra-time against England at Wembley. Four years later he took revenge with a remarkable back-headed goal in the quarter-final victory which wrecked England's title defence.

Measuring in at only 5ft 7in, Seeler made up for his lack of height with a powerful spring-balanced determination to get his head to crosses above taller defenders. The striker also claimed some dramatic acrobatic goals among the 507 he scored in 19 years with Hamburg, his only professional club. His father had played for them and Seeler did so alongside elder brother and left-half Dieter.

Hamburg and the Seeler brothers were German champions in 1960 and reached the semi-finals of the Champions Cup the following season. Having scored the goal that put his team 2-1 up on aggregate against Barcelona, he was close to taking his team to their first European final, only for Sandor Kocsis to net a 90th-minute equaliser. Barca went on to win the deciding play-off 1-0.

Seven years later, Seeler was on target in another European semi-final, this time against Cardiff City to reach the Cup Winners' Cup final, where they were beaten 2-0 by Milan.

More than anything, Seeler was committed: to his club, his country, and to challenges. His entire career was spent at Hamburg, rejecting big-money offers to follow the likes of Helmut Haller, Horst Szymaniak and Albert Brulls to Italy. These were days before clubs were obliged to release players for their national teams. Adidas boss Adi Dassler and Sepp Herberger, the manager who made him captain of West Germany, asked Seeler to consider his priorities – playing for his country or the money. He never hesitated.

His combative style cost him a number of injuries, most notably a ruptured Achilles in 1965. The surgeon who fitted a plastic tendon warned Seeler he would be lucky to walk again, let alone play. Six months later Seeler persuaded national coach Helmut Schon to recall him for a crucial World Cup qualifier in Sweden. West Germany won 2-1 and Seeler scored the winning goal that took them to England.

Seeler was a part-timer in the old regional league system that existed until the revolutionary creation in 1962 of the unified Bundesliga. At that point German football was a close stylistic cousin of the physical British and Scandinavian game. But full-time professionalism brought new investment in coaching and a more technical and tactical approach pioneered by Bayern Munich and Borussia Monchengladbach.

Seeler continued to thrive even though the media touted a young Gerd Muller as his national team replacement. Instead Seeler used his experience and football nous to drop a little deeper and thus create more space for both of them. The partnership reached its pinnacle in Mexico in 1970 World Cup, when the newcomer took the Golden Boot with ten goals, while Seeler netted three himself.

He was involved four years later as "honorary captain", an honour bestowed on him by the DFB, as West Germany won the trophy on home soil.

Keir Radnedge

Cover star...Uwe Seeler graces World Soccer's April 1970 cover

JOHN HUGHES
(1943-2022)

A Celtic legend who hit 189 goals in 416 games and won 17 major honours with the Bhoys, including the 1967 European Cup, although he was injured for the final.

TERRY NEILL
(1942-2022)

Captained Arsenal at the age of 20 in 1962. The tough-tackling centre-half won 59 caps for Northern Ireland, later managing his country before returning to Highbury to win the 1979 FA Cup.

ANDREJS RUBINS
(1978-2022)

Ex-Crystal Palace winger who played 117 times for Latvia, including at Euro 2004, the country's only major tournament.

VALERO SERER
(1932-2022)

Forward and all-time record scorer for one of Spain's oldest clubs, Gimnastic.

VILLIAM VECCHI
(1948-2022)

A keeper in the 1970s, Vecchi served as Carlo Ancelotti's goalkeeping coach at various clubs, with Gianluigi Buffon, Dida and Iker Casillas among his students.

ADRIAN THORNE
(1937-2022)

Forward who hit 44 goals in 84 games for Brighton between 1958 and 1961.

HANS WEILBACHER
(1933-2022)

The one-cap West Germany midfielder was in the Frankfurt team that lost to Real Madrid in the 1960 European Cup final.

DAVID MOORES
(1946-2022)

Liverpool chairman from 1991 to 2007, during which time the Anfield outfit won the Champions League, UEFA Cup, FA Cup and League Cup.

Historic season... David Moores and Gerard Houllier with Liverpool's 2001 UEFA Cup

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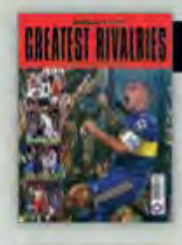

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30 eye-catching transfers

Jamie Evans picks out some of the summer's most intriguing transfers

RAHEEM STERLING

(Manchester City to Chelsea)

1 Aside from being an intriguing replacement for Romelu Lukaku in Chelsea's recalibrated attack, Sterling's move from Manchester City is eye-catching as it demonstrates a wider emerging trend.

By selling Sterling to the Blues – as well as Gabriel Jesus and Oleksandr Zinchenko to Arsenal – City have moved on from the previously unwritten rule that you must never sell to direct rivals unless absolutely unnecessary. It was a phenomenon seen in Italy's top flight during the 1990s and early 2000s, when big names would often move between major Serie A clubs.

The change of approach is reflective of the Premier League's economic dominance over the rest of Europe. Perhaps City would have preferred to sell Sterling to a foreign club, but none were prepared to match his £50 million price tag, nor his reported £300k-a-week wages. If the English top flight continues as the world's richest league, transfers such as this could become a common sight.

Alternatively, City may also believe that they can afford to offload squad players to their domestic rivals without relinquishing their grip on the Premier League trophy. Sterling and Chelsea – as well as Jesus, Zinchenko and Arsenal – will be determined to prove that calculation wrong.

PAULO DYBALA

(Juventus to Roma)

2 Roma fans turned out in their thousands to greet the Argentina playmaker, and with good reason: at his best, Dybala can be one of the most joyful attackers in Europe.

The problem has been demonstrating that class on a consistent basis. After joining Juventus in 2015, Dybala was named in the Serie A Team of the Year three seasons in a row, racking up goals and assists, but his progress stalled somewhat after the arrival of Cristiano Ronaldo in 2018. He was named Italy's best player in 2019-20, yet struggled to replicate that form in his last two seasons.

The 28-year-old arrives at Roma with a point to prove, after Juventus chose not to renew his contract. Jose Mourinho has previous when it comes to getting the best out of big names with bruised egos rejected by big clubs – Samuel Eto'o and Wesley Sneijder at Inter, and Cesc Fabregas at Chelsea, for example. If he can do the same with Dybala – while also continuing to harness the goodwill of the fans – Roma could add to last season's Europa Conference trophy.

Fans' favourite... Paulo Dybala

Homecoming...Nordi Mukiele

NORDI MUKIELE

(RB Leipzig to Paris Saint-Germain)

3 Since appointing Christophe Galtier as manager, and transfer guru Luis Campos as an adviser, Paris Saint-Germain's hierarchy have spoken of putting an end to their previous "flashy" transfer policy. As a result, their summer business has been marked by sensible signings like proven Ligue 1 performer Renato Sanches, as opposed to last summer when they splurged on Lionel Messi, Sergio Ramos, and Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Yet the signing of Mukiele hints at the reversal of another even more baffling policy that has been in place under PSG's Qatari owners: continually overlooking local and academy-produced players.

Paris is arguably the biggest hotbed of footballing talent in Europe, yet Kylian Mbappe was the only Parisian first-team regular in PSG's squad last season.

The arrival of Mukiele, who began his career in Paris FC's academy, changes that. During his time at Leipzig, the 24-year-old built a reputation as one of Europe's most promising young defenders before returning to his home city. PSG may well pursue more home-grown players, starting with their academy graduate Christopher Nkunku, now of Leipzig.

Change of philosophy... Raheem Sterling

XAVI SIMONS

(Paris Saint-Germain to PSV)

4 There are not many players that develop such a blossoming reputation at such a young age, with so few first-team appearances to their name. Yet Simons has been widely discussed as a star of the future ever since Paris Saint-Germain saw off competition from Chelsea and Real Madrid to sign him from Barcelona in 2019, when he was only 16.

This summer saw him join a club where he will be a first-team regular, and he wasted little time in making an impression at PSV. He scored in the Dutch Super Cup victory over Ajax after appearing as a late substitute, collected an assist on his Eredivisie debut, then set up another and scored two more in the 5-2 demolition of Go Ahead Eagles.

The early signs are that Simons' home country will be the perfect arena for the 19-year-old – whose father Regillio played over 200 Eredivisie games – to develop his potential. While the 2022 World Cup may come too soon for him, he is a highly exciting future prospect.

Instant impact... Simons rounds the Ajax goalkeeper to score in the Dutch Super Cup

Moving up... Jonathan Clauss is presented inside the Stade Velodrome

JONATHAN CLAUSS

(Lens to Marseille)

5 The fairy-tale continues. Clauss only made his top-flight debut in 2020-21, joining Lens from Arminia Bielefeld after helping them win promotion to the Bundesliga. Prior to that he was playing in the lower reaches of French football, representing Avranches in the third tier as recently as 2016-17.

Now, on the eve of his 30th birthday, the adventurous right wing-back will play in the Champions League, with a serious chance of going to the World Cup with France as well.

Last season he was the most creative defender in France, collecting 11 Ligue 1 assists from the right side of Lens' 3-5-2 formation. So far he has reprised a similar role for Marseille – opening his assists account in his second game – and could do something similar for the national team if Didier Deschamps opts to return to a back three and wing-backs, as he has occasionally done in the past.

Clauss is likely to add to his four France caps during September's Nations League fixtures with Austria and Denmark.

THE REST

CALVIN BASSEY
(Rangers to Ajax)
The Nigeria international was one of the stars of Rangers' run to the Europa League final. Joined the Dutch champions for around £20m, Rangers' record sale.

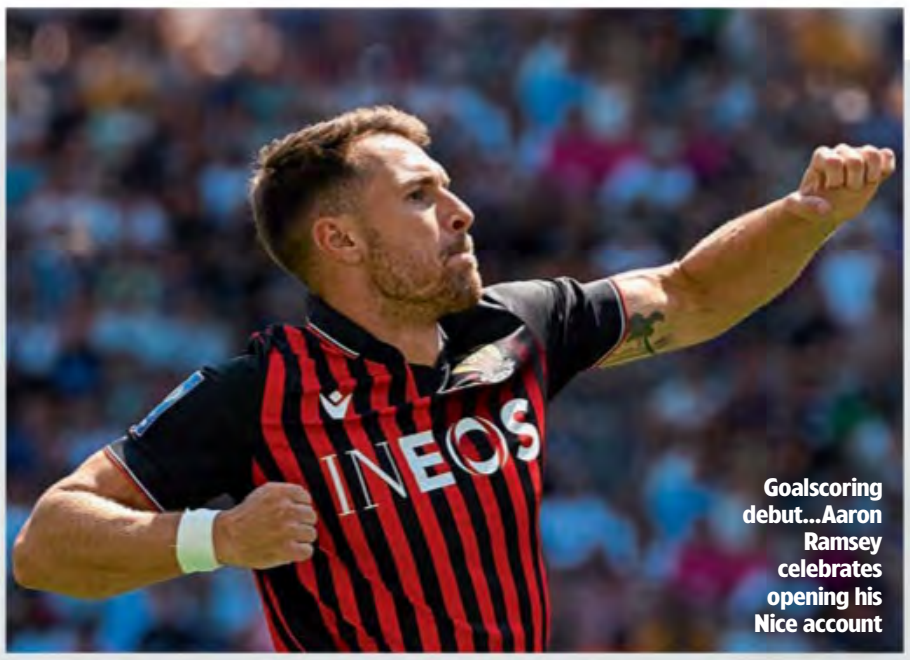
VALENTIN CASTELLANOS
(New York City to Girona, loan)
Top scorer in the 2021 MLS season, and already had 13 in 17 appearances this year, before moving to another club in the City Football Group network on loan.

MOHAMED ALI CHO
(Angers to Real Sociedad)
Hugely promising forward that has been a Ligue 1 regular since the age of 16 years old. An England youth international, but now committed to France.

LEVI COLWILL
(Chelsea to Brighton, loan)
An extra sweetener in the deal that took Marc Cucurella in the opposite direction. The left-sided England U21 defender is very highly rated.

FRANCISCO CONCEICAO
(Porto to Ajax)
Like his father Sergio, the former Portugal international and current Porto boss, 19-year-old Francisco is an exciting winger. Will initially play for Ajax's reserves in the second tier after €5m move.

CHARLES DE KETELAERE
(Club Brugge to Milan)
Only 21 years old, yet has already been Brugge's outstanding attacker for the last two years. Tall, graceful playmaker with eight Belgium caps to his name.



Goalscoring debut...Aaron Ramsey celebrates opening his Nice account

BOBBY DUNCAN
(Derby to Real Balompedica Linense)
One-time Liverpool prodigy, and cousin of Steven Gerrard, who rejected a contract offer at Anfield in 2019. Now playing in the Spanish third tier. Still only 21 years old.

SEBASTIANO ESPOSITO
(Inter to Anderlecht, loan)
Tipped for greatness after starring for Italy at the U17 Euros in 2019, but yet to break into Inter's first team. Move to Belgium could help unlock the 20-year-old striker's potential.

CESC FABREGAS
(Monaco to Como)
Serie B side Como appear to have an exciting future, not only signing ex-Spain international Fabregas but also attracting Thierry Henry as an investor, according to reports.

LEWIS FERGUSON
(Aberdeen to Bologna)
Replaces Aaron Hickey, who joined Brentford for £18.6m this summer, as Bologna's sole Scottish player. Scored 16 goals from midfield last season after making his Scotland debut in 2021.

Belgian wonderkid... Charles De Ketelaere

BRADLEY FINK
(Dortmund to Basel)
English-qualified and Swiss youth striker scored 16 goals in 15 games in last season's U19 Bundesliga.

MORGAN GIBBS-WHITE
(Wolves to Nottingham Forest)
With an initial outlay of £35m, plus £9.5m in extras, this is a risk. The 22-year-old does have potential though, winning the U17 World Cup with England under Steve Cooper.

ANDRI GUDJOHNSEN
(Real Madrid to Norrkoping)
20-year-old son of ex-Iceland star Eidur Gudjohnsen has moved to Sweden after 12 years in Spain.

TAKEFUSA KUBO
(Real Madrid to Real Sociedad)
The "Japanese Messi", as he was dubbed while playing in Real's academy, has left Madrid after a series of loans. Scored on his debut.

JORDAN LARSSON
(Moscow to Schalke)
Son of former Celtic hero Henrik Larsson gets his shot in Germany after scoring goals in the Swedish, Dutch and Russian top flights.

ADEMOLA LOOKMAN
(RB Leipzig to Atalanta)
The Nigeria interional has struggled to find a home since winning the U20 World Cup with England in 2017, but scored on his Serie A debut with a well-taken finish.

RABBI MATONDO
(Schalke to Rangers)
Compared with Jadon Sancho after joining Schalke from Manchester City in 2019. Failed to take off in Germany but impressed on loan at Cercle Brugge last season.

TANGUY NIANZOU
(Bayern Munich to Sevilla)
The 20-year-old centre-back was poached from PSG's academy in 2020, yet only started six Bundesliga matches. Recruited by Sevilla to replace Barcelona-bound Jules Kounde.

RIQUI PUIG
(Barca to LA Galaxy)
Once tipped as the heir to Xavi's midfield throne at Barcelona, now cast out after criticising team-mate Ferran Torres on a leaked pocast. Still only 23, and could be rejuvenated in MLS.

CALVIN RAMSAY
(Aberdeen to Liverpool)
Right-back understudy to Trent Alexander-Arnold for this season, but the 18-year-old has an exciting future. Voted Scottish Football Writers' Young Player of the Year for 2021-22.

AARON RAMSEY
(Juventus to Nice)
The Wales midfielder had a tough time at Juve, but scored on his debut after moving to the south of France. Hoping to return to his best ahead of the World Cup.

BENJAMIN SESKO
(RB Salzburg to RB Leipzig)
Powerful 19-year-old attacker, compared with Erling Haaland after coming through Salzburg's ranks. Won't move until 2023, and until then could catch the eye in the Champions League.

MATHYS TEL
(Rennes to Bayern Munich)
The 17-year-old was snapped up by Bayern for almost €30m, after replacing Eduaro Camavinga as Rennes' youngest-ever player.

TIMO WERNER
(Chelsea to RB Leipzig)
The German forward wants to be the first player to score 100 goals for RB Leipzig after returning to the club where he scored 95 times between 2016 and 2020.

ERAN ZAHAVI
(PSV to Maccabi Tel Aviv)
Israel's record goalscorer returns to the club he scored 127 goals for between 2012 and 2016 after spells in China and with PSV.

eyewitness

Mat Guy reports

SAN MARINO

The world's worst national team

Danilo Rinaldi stands with his arms locked around the shoulders of his team-mates either side of him beneath the sweltering sun.

Backs straighten, heads look up to the stands, as the opening chords of "*Inno Nazionale della Repubblica*" ring out. A row of Sammarinese, lost for a moment, in the moment, eyes glassy, distant, focusing on a place very few of us ever reach, where the pride, meaning, belonging felt in representing your nation lives.

We can only imagine, but Danilo Rinaldi knows. It is not his first experience of this moment, shared with 600 spectators at the national stadium of San Marino.

He has experienced it 46 times in his international career spanning 14 years.

He has experienced it in front of 85,000 fans at Wembley, twice. He has experienced it lining up against Andrea Pirlo's Italy, twice. He has faced down the then-world champions in Germany. He has travelled the continent in the name of San Marino.

And here he is, once more, in the slightly more humble surroundings of a Nations League Group D fixture against Malta, at that place again. A line of proud chests, shirts sporting the silhouettes of the three towers that overlook all of San Marino from their vantage point above the capital city, seemingly pulled up toward the sky by the music and what it symbolises. And as the national anthem ends, the line of Sammarinese breaks out in animation – applause, fist bumps and hugs.

It is time.

San Marino, both the smallest and lowest-ranked nation in UEFA, remains hidden to most of the world, lost between Italy's Adriatic coast and the stunning, verdant hills of Tuscany. Off the beaten path, at the end of a series of roads withering in size and stature, the Republic of San Marino – a micro-state of some 33,000 people, founded in 300AD, and left largely untroubled by the outside world ever since – is the oldest sovereign state in the world. According to the FIFA World Rankings, it is also the worst footballing nation in the world: 211th out of 211.

It is ironic, therefore, that this tiny enclave exists within one of the world's best: Italy.

Indeed, Italy seemed destined to be a master of the beautiful game, its geography resembling a footballer's leg, about to strike a Sicilian shaped ball. And among that, maybe somewhere above the knee of this likeness, possibly a tiny detail on a sock pulled up toward the thigh – a beautiful, historic, cultured, ancient, tiny detail – San Marino.

Given its size, it is maybe no surprise to learn that it has only ever won one international football match, against Liechtenstein back in 2004. It is also no surprise that heavy defeats are a fact of life for San Marino. Rinaldi himself has experienced 10-0 defeats in his international career, against Poland and Croatia, but the record defeat of 13-0 against Germany came before his time.

And while damage limitation is often the main tactic, it is not at the expense of a desire to attack, to express, to play, as witnessed against Scotland at Hampden Park in 2019, where 6-0 down, they kept pressing and probing, though, as is the norm, to no avail.

With San Marino's international statistics laid bare for all to see, it is no great surprise to learn that Rinaldi is the joint-leading goalscorer among the current crop of players, with one solitary strike, a penalty in an August 2012 friendly match against today's opponents Malta.

He is tied as top scorer with five other players, including his strike partner for the day Nicola Nanni,

San Marino...ahead of June's UEFA Nations League clash with Malta in Serravalle

Cancelled...Nicola Nanni prepares to take a penalty

which is in itself a rarity – a San Marino side with two strikers. But this is the Nations League and, because of that, all bets are off.

Malta may well be some 50 places better off in the FIFA rankings, but they are close enough for the Sammarinese manager to go for it. A tournament staggered in abilities across four leagues enabling even the lowliest to feel like this could be their day.

Something not echoed by the vocal, but small Maltese support, decked in tabards made out of flags, banners and old shirts, sewn together in an act of dedication to the cause. A drum and trumpet lead the chorus. They are here for a dominant display. They do not get it.

San Marino are sharp, at it, snapping at every Maltese player with the ball, Michael Battistini in midfield breaking things up, setting off attacks that Rinaldi and Nanni feed off, turning the visitors' back-line again and again. It is just the final ball that fails them. But they are on top in all but that most important statistic.

The national stadium holds just under 3,000 spectators, but rarely needs to. Today's crowd of 600 are accommodated in the main stand that runs the length of the pitch. The stand on the far side remains unoccupied, ball boys and girls the only spectators behind each goal that house the bends to an athletics track and little else.

While 600 may seem paltry for an international fixture, that figure equates to roughly two per cent of the entire population. For context, if two per cent of England's residents wanted to see their national team play at the same time, Wembley Stadium would need 920,000 extra seats.

The two per cent that are here like what they are seeing. San Marino do not dominate often, but they are here. And when the Maltese coach makes two changes at the break, it does little to halt the momentum generated. Instead, bad fortune and psychology do that.

> The San Marino faithful are not a raucous set of supporters. How can you be when most have never even seen their team win a game?

Another probing run, a ball into Nanni, who drives into the penalty

area. A challenge. Nanni falls. The referee doesn't hesitate; he blows his whistle and points to the spot. Penalty. A deserved chance at only a 28th San Marino goal in 36 years of trying, and an even rarer situation of taking the lead.

The San Marino faithful find themselves drawn up out of their seats. They are not a raucous set of supporters. How can you be when most have never even seen their team win a game? They are respectful, tolerant of their louder Maltese brethren, who, for the moment, have sunk down, head in hands, drum and trumpet silenced.

But a lack of clamour, of febrile chanting does not mean a lack of care. The supporters care about their team deeply, and want so very badly for this penalty to go in.

Nanni waits, and waits – for what seems like an eternity – stood over the ball, picturing his run-up, how he is going to strike it, and where. He glances across at the referee, who has his hand to his ear. He is listening into his earpiece, then blows his whistle, draws a box with his fingers and runs to a small monitor by the side of the pitch.

The curse of VAR ruins San Marino's day. No penalty. The players, the fans, are crushed. Only they truly appreciate how rare these opportunities are.

It is too much. Almost immediately Malta pass the ball down the field to substitute Jan Busuttil, who buries a wicked strike from the edge of the box into the bottom corner. 1-0 Malta. Sixteen minutes later they have a second, final goal of the game.

A flurry of yellow cards through desperate Sammarinese lunges sums up the feelings of hurt and disappointment as the team hurtle towards yet another defeat – one that the hosts did more than enough to warrant more from.

Defeat it may be, but Rinaldi and co. have learned how to take the positives. A performance with expressive, flowing play, togetherness and a real team ethic, all peppered with genuine quality.

Bad result, good performance. And sometimes, when you are the smallest football nation on the continent, that has to be enough.

There is enough to suggest that in the not too distant future San Marino may be able to improve their results, just like their fellow minnows – Gibraltar, Liechtenstein, and the Faroe Islands – have all done.

Pride, endeavour, passion, they have it all in the Tuscan foothills. And when that next win comes, it will be more than deserved.

Booked...San Marino defender Dante Rossi fouls Malta winger Joseph Mbong

Scenic...San Marino's national stadium

eye witness

Alex Ireland reports

FINLAND

HJK ruling the Finnish roost

HJK Under-17s coach...Mikael Forssell in action for Finland during his playing days

Helsingin Jalkapalloklubi (HJK), nicknamed "Klubi" and based in Helsinki's Toolo suburb, are one of the world's most decorated football teams. A current period of domestic dominance has seen them claim ten of the last 13 Veikkausliiga titles, taking them to a total of 31 Finnish top-flight crowns since their foundation in 1907. They have qualified for the Champions League and Europa League group stages in the modern era, in addition to recording memorable victories in competitive games against the likes of Celtic, Benfica, Schalke and Torino.

They have long been the backbone of the Finnish national team, with 15 of the players called up for June's international fixtures having played for the club, and an additional seven current players called up in the last 12 months. Finland's record cap holder, Jari Litmanen, and all-time top scorer, Teemu Pukki, are both Klubi alumni, as are former international stars Antti Niemi, Teemu Tainio and Shefki Kuqi. All this has been achieved with an average crowd of just under 4,000 inside their 10,770-capacity Bolt Arena home, and a much smaller budget than leading clubs in Norway and Sweden.

A key to HJK's consistency is their enviable record of youth development. Their current Under-17s coach, Mikael Forssell, is a graduate of the academy himself, and arguably the most famous export of recent years. As well as more than 500 career appearances for club and country, and 150 goals for the likes of Chelsea, Birmingham City and Borussia Monchengladbach, the former striker is also third on the all-time Finland scorers list behind Pukki and Litmanen.

Elsewhere within the club hierarchy, CEO Aki Riihilahti joined at the age of six before going on to make over 170 appearances in a five-year spell at Crystal Palace, later returning to his hometown club to help HJK win three consecutive titles from 2009 to 2011.

The high quality of the club's academy is shown by the profile of teams that subsequently acquire them, with player sales to Ajax, Chelsea, Bayer Leverkusen, Arsenal, RB Leipzig and Tottenham Hotspur in recent years. The CIES Football Observatory rankings include a grading of European clubs' academy productivity, based on the number of ex-players currently playing in the 31 UEFA top divisions. In 2021, the most recent assessment, HJK (31 players) were the top-rated Scandinavian team and 46th overall ahead of the likes of Atletico Madrid, Bayern Munich, Roma and Tottenham.

As sports director Miika Takkula emphasises, the importance of the academy to the club is such that it is even a key criteria for selection of the head coach: "They have to understand the importance of the academy, and have experience of an environment where the academy is an integral part of the first team".

> A key to HJK's consistency is their enviable record of youth development. Their current Under-17s coach, Mikael Forssell, is a graduate of the academy himself

Of the current crop, Santeri Vaananen, a Finland U21 international and well-rounded defensive midfielder, and tricky dribbler Casper Terho are considered the ones to watch.

The emphasis on youth is part of a wider goal to maximise the potential of their playing staff, having recently invested heavily in performance and international scouting teams. As a result, HJK's technical staff costs

are higher than most teams relative to their playing staff budget. While many domestically dominant teams cherry-pick the best domestic talents from competitors, the lower budgets in the Finnish league mean that other academy structures are often under-resourced. This is evident in Finland's various youth teams, which are dominated by HJK players.

"If you have the ability and are willing to work hard, this is the club where you have the opportunities and the facilities, coaching and processes to eventually play in other European leagues," says Riihilahti.

HJK aim to develop two to three players each season for the first team, but also rely on external recruitment. A key focus is repatriating former

Bolt Arena...inside HJK's stadium

Notable alumni... Finnish legend Jari Litmanen enjoyed two spells at HJK

players who have been playing in top European leagues to add experience to the squad. Academy product Perparim Hetemaj, now aged 35, recently returned after playing 300 Serie A matches for Brescia, Chievo and Benevento, while Janne Saksela, Joona Toivio and Jukka Raitala are also enjoying their second spells at the club after time away.

The club has a tactical philosophy taught from the youngest youth sides

through to the first team, so filling the senior team with players familiar with the club has clear advantages. "We have a flexible system emphasising overloads, progressing the ball when possible but always aiming to control possession," says Takkula.

The idea of a strong HJK DNA in the first team also extends to the technical staff. Head coach Toni Koskela previously served in a number of coaching positions before returning to the club in his current role in 2019. Goalkeeping coach Ville Wallen played over 250 games for the club, while Takkula has worked at the club for 12 years since joining as a youth team coach. Finally, chairman Olli-Pekka Lyytikainen followed his father in taking charge of the club, and could be succeeded by his own son, who is also a board member.

While HJK dominate the domestic scene, when competing in European competition they often face a huge gulf in resources. For example, their opponents in the 2021 Champions League qualifying round were Sweden's Malmo, whose £30m turnover is around three times that of the Finnish champions. HJK can match most opponents' work-rate or organisation, but can lack match-winning quality.

HJK's position in Finland's capital city guarantees larger crowds

HJK CEO...Aki Riihilahti in his role as ECA vice-chairman

Klubi fans...supporters inside the Bolt Arena

than their domestic rivals, and opportunities to develop additional stable income streams such as event hire and a corporate wellness business. The club are currently planning to add to their solitary indoor pitch, which limits training capacity in a city where freezing weather and heavy winter snowfalls disrupt outdoor sessions for much of the winter.

The addition of the Europa Conference League has, though, been a tremendous boost for HJK. And for that, they thank CEO Riihilahti – or "Aga", as he is nicknamed.

As the vice-chairman of the European Clubs Association (ECA), Riihilahti is a prominent figure in European football's administrative circles and a shrewd operator. In his role as a UEFA club competitions committee member he was involved in the development of the Europa Conference League – which, as a result, is known by Klubi fans as the "Aga Cup".

The new tournament offers greater opportunities for clubs like HJK to gain both experience and income from regular European football; in the inaugural 2021-22 competition they played 14 European fixtures.

The new competition has also helped quell interest in the Atlantic League, a long-mooted initiative to combine clubs from outside the top five leagues into one competition, which Riihilahti has never been a fan of.

HJK fans demand success and are vocal with their displeasure when the team performs below expectations

"I think [a merging of leagues] would concentrate revenue in a small number of clubs," he says. "I still believe that everybody's home base should be playing against local clubs, but we need more European fixtures to improve the development of players in these leagues".

While regular European football helps the bank balance, it does nothing to quell supporters' expectations. Unsurprisingly, HJK fans demand success and are vocal with their displeasure when the team performs below expectations. KuPS from the central Finland city of Kuopio are their closest on-field rivals, having finished in the top three each season since 2017, including a title win in 2019.

For the fans though, the most keenly anticipated match-ups are those against fellow Helsinki-based side HIFK, who returned to the top flight in 2015 after a 43-year absence. Since then the clubs have shared the Bolt Arena as their home stadium, though the rivalry remains intense. Despite their long absence, HIFK are one of Finland's most successful clubs with seven league titles, most of which came in the 1930s when they regularly battled HJK at the top of the league.

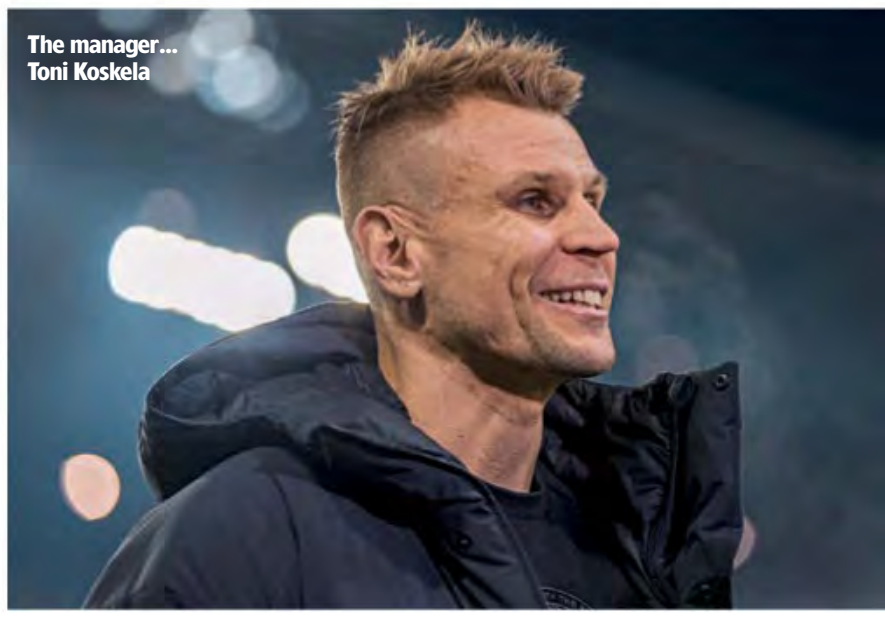
Traditionally, one of the points of contention between the two teams was language, with HIFK hailing from the city's Swedish-speaking quarter and HJK's fans speaking Finnish. While that element is less relevant to the modern rivalry, the club nevertheless retains a strong nationalistic interest, which is reflected in the colour of their strip, alongside a commitment to local, social responsibilities.

"We aim to support grassroots participation in football but also promote important issues outside of sport," says communications manager Pekka Mantyla, with HJK committed to a number of off-the-pitch initiatives. For example, Ukrainian refugees have been offered the opportunity to train free of charge, the club's foundation offers financial assistance to players from low-income families, while they are currently on course to be fully carbon-neutral by 2025.

Players are also treated well; HJK offers parity of provision for male and female academy players, as part of a highly successful women's team, which has won 22 national league titles since the league's foundation in 1971, while all current HJK players are guaranteed jobs on retiring thanks to a partnership with recruitment firm Bolt.Works, the company that sponsors the stadium.

It is a spirit that is reflected by members of the playing staff; star striker Riku Riski refused to join a national team training camp in Qatar in 2019 as a protest against the country's human rights record, following former HJK team-mate Tim Sparv, who has been an outspoken critic of the 2022 World Cup hosts.

HJK's commitment to their core values, both on and off the pitch, have made the last few years a golden era for them, and there is no sign of it ending any time soon.



The manager... Toni Koskela

Champions League draw

GROUP A

AJAX
LIVERPOOL
NAPOLI
RANGERS

Reunion...Ajax and Liverpool met in the 2020-21 group stage

GROUP B

PORTO
ATLETICO MADRID
BAYER LEVERKUSEN
CLUB BRUGGE

Feisty...there were four red cards in two games when Porto and Atletico met last season

GROUP C

BAYERN MUNICH
BARCELONA
INTERNAZIONALE
VIKTORIA PLZEN

Returning hero...Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski will face former club Bayern Munich

GROUP D

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
SPORTING
MARSEILLE

Eyeing another upset...Eintracht Frankfurt stunned Barcelona in last season's Europa League

GROUP STAGE SCHEDULE

- **MATCHDAY 1** 6-7 September
- **MATCHDAY 2** 13-14 September
- **MATCHDAY 3** 4-5 October
- **MATCHDAY 4** 11-12 October
- **MATCHDAY 5** 25-26 October
- **MATCHDAY 6** 1-2 November

GROUP E

MILAN
CHELSEA
RED BULL SALZBURG
DINAMO ZAGREB

Point to prove...Fikayo Tomori left Chelsea for Milan in 2021

GROUP F

REAL MADRID
RB LEIPZIG
SHAKHTAR DONETSK
CELTIC

Holders...Real Madrid have been handed a favourable draw

GROUP G

MANCHESTER CITY
SEVILLA
BORUSSIA DORTMUND
FC COPENHAGEN

Dortmund return...will Erling Haaland come back to haunt his old club?

GROUP H

PARIS-SAINT GERMAIN
JUVENTUS
BENFICA
MACCABI HAIFA

Back in Paris...Angel Di Maria joined Juventus from PSG this summer

The favourites

MANCHESTER CITY

Still chasing the final jewel in the crown

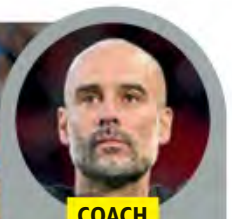
Since winning the 1969-70 European Cup Winners' Cup – beating Polish outfit Gornik Zabrze on a night of torrential rain in Vienna – City have not lifted a European trophy. But is the 52-year drought about to come to an end? Under Pep Guardiola, City have always had the fluidity, creativity and sheer *joie de vivre*. However now they have an extra offensive weapon: a genuine No.9 in the shape of Norwegian Erling Haaland.

Potentially, his physical presence and irrepressible goalscoring instinct represent the missing piece of the jigsaw. In theory, the net-result of work-of-art approach play and a genuine marksman could be nuclear. Haaland knows all about scoring in the Champions League: in his first-ever match in the competition in September 2019 he bagged a hat-trick for Red Bull Salzburg against Genk and, so far, has an awe-inspiring strike-rate of 23 goals in 19 fixtures for Salzburg and Dortmund.

Tellingly, Pep insists Haaland will have to adapt to City's style and not vice versa.

Haaland... the missing piece?

The Manchester club did not limit their summer recruitment drive to Haaland. They also spent big money on England defensive midfielder Kalvin Phillips, signed young Argentine front man Julian Alvarez and brought in a very capable back-up keeper in Stefan Ortega from Arminia Bielefeld. But they balanced the books somewhat, racking up £127 million from the departures of Raheem Sterling (Chelsea) and the Arsenal-bound duo of Gabriel Jesus and Oleksandr Zinchenko.



COACH

Pep Guardiola
The monkey on the back of the Catalan boss is his 11 years without a Champions League triumph – quite a drought for a coach of his expertise.

KEY MAN

Kevin De Bruyne
Pep describes him as "the best midfielder in the world" and it's a valid claim.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Julian Alvarez
Diminutive Argentine striker, 22, blessed with that rare capacity to make goalscoring look ridiculously easy.

What should fans expect from Jack Grealish in his second season at City?

Much more. For an attacking midfielder who cost £100m, Grealish did not deliver nearly enough last term with a return of six goals and four assists in all comps. On an optimistic note, he did play with more decisiveness in the latter part of 2021-22.

Does Kalvin Phillips have a chance of displacing Rodri as the anchorman?

Rodri's form was excellent last season and he offers considerably more variety. As well as shielding the back-line, Rodri also has the intelligence to transpose himself to a box-to-box role. Phillips does not cover the same number of bases.

Are City's centre-backs sufficiently comfortable when in possession?

Certainly Aymeric Laporte and John Stones are, but the same cannot be said of Nathan Ake and Ruben Dias. Faced with a high press, the latter pairing can flounder in the construction phase.

LIVERPOOL

Klopp's nearly men as determined as ever

Over the past five years, Jurgen Klopp's heavy metal football team have produced countless chart-topping riffs in the Champions League: twice runners-up (2017-18 and 2021-22) and top of the podium in 2018-19. Indeed, with a little more luck, they would have beaten Real Madrid in last season's final.

Fortunately for all followers of the Reds, this is not a squad or a club to be satisfied with past successes. At Anfield, thoughts tend to be relentlessly trained on tomorrow's challenges. After coming within a whisker of completing a unique four-trophy clean sweep last term, there is an energising air of unfinished business about the place.

The decision of sensational Senegal attacker Sadio Mane to up sticks for Bayern Munich may have left some fans reeling, but in Mohamed Salah, Luis Diaz, Diogo Jota and the newly-arrived Uruguayan front-man Darwin Nunez – bought from Benfica for an initial £64m – Liverpool have all the

Reds newcomers...Fabio Carvalho and Darwin Nunez

firepower, speed and free-flowing craft they require. The goals will not suddenly dry up now that Mane has gone.

Add the surfeit of front-line quality to the imaginative playmaking of Thiago Alcantara, as well as the potency of attacking full-backs Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold, and you have a fool-proof blueprint for both dominance of the ball and the scoreboard.

COACH

Jurgen Klopp
Given his record in Champions League finals – one win to three defeats – the charismatic German will want to redress that imbalance.

KEY MAN

Mo Salah
The red-half of Liverpool heaved a sigh of relief when the irrepressible Egyptian goalscorer signed a new deal.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Fabio Carvalho
A Portuguese midfielder born to make things happen between the lines.

What will new boy Darwin Nunez bring to Liverpool's attack?

Well, he's no false nine, that's for sure. A goal poacher supreme, Nunez will give Liverpool a different dimension in the attacking-third. Tall, strong and quick, he makes for a thrilling combination of physicality, aggression and work ethic.

Is the midfield a problem area?

It could be, especially if Thiago and Naby Keita continue to be injury-prone, while James Milner and Jordan Henderson are not getting any younger. Taking all these factors into account, that leaves holding midfielder Fabinho with an awful lot on his plate – unless Fabio Carvalho, Curtis Jones or Harvey Elliott can step up.

Could Trent see minutes in midfield?

In short, probably not, as Klopp insists that he sees no point in shifting the "best right-back in the world" further forward. Still, his hand could be forced if midfield does prove to be a problem area.

REAL MADRID

Holders and record winners remain hungry for more

Champions League winners 14 times, including in four of the last six seasons, and semi-finalists on seven occasions this century, it's fair to say that Europe's premier club competition remains very much in the DNA of Real Madrid.

Their remarkable road to glory in last season's Champions League was a masterclass in never-say-die spirit; rising from their deathbed to see off PSG, Chelsea and Manchester City before battling like lions to edge out Liverpool in the final. In terms of grit, strong nerves and unwavering self-belief, Carlo Ancelotti's side were absolutely peerless. Even in the most perilous of circumstances, they find a way to win.

The hunger for trophies is incredible. Following every triumph, the slate is immediately wiped clean, with the focus moving to a new set of horizons. As Toni Kroos recently pointed out, the desire never dissipates at the Bernabeu.

Real failed to land PSG superstar Kylian Mbappe, their top transfer target of the summer, but were more successful with swoops for ex-Monaco midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni and Chelsea's German international centre-back Antonio Rudiger.

Coach Ancelotti has a warning for all would-be pretenders to Real's crown. "I think we have a better squad now than the one we had last year. In training you can see there's even more intensity."

COACH

Carlo Ancelotti
The 63-year-old certainly knows how to prevail at the European summit with a grand total of six winners' medals: twice as a midfielder for Milan, and four times as a coach (two with Milan, two with Madrid). A non-dogmatic, flexible football thinker who adapts his tactics to the characteristics of the players at his disposal.

KEY MAN

Karim Benzema
A total of 86 Champions League goals for Lyon and Real speak for themselves. The French striker is the front-runner for the Ballon d'Or.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Aurelien Tchouameni
One of Europe's best up-and-coming midfielders, the 22-year-old spent his formative years in Bordeaux as a forward.

Is Rudiger an automatic starter?

Anything but. Ancelotti recently insisted that duo Eder Militao and David Alaba remain his first-choice central defenders, and gave further evidence of his train of thought by playing Rudiger at left-back in pre-season. Could the manager be tempted to try a three-man defence in order to make room for Rudiger?

What will happen when 34-year-old talisman Benzema needs a rest?

Apparently, Ancelotti is toying with the idea of deploying a false nine, with the likes of Marcos Asensio, Rodrygo or Eden Hazard all contenders for such a role. The latter, plagued with injuries for much of his three years at Real, normally operates on the wing but could look at a positional change as a new beginning.

Who will occupy the right-wing slot?

Rodrygo, the hero of the hour in the Champions League semi-final win over Manchester City, should be the favourite but must improve his consistency. The other option is the Uruguayan Fede Valverde, who might lack Rodrygo's trickery and vertical threat, but offers more control and physical presence.

Champions...Vinicius Junior celebrates scoring the winner in last season's final against Liverpool

The Heavyweights

BAYERN MUNICH

Life after Lewandowski

The new season marks a turning point in the German champions' existence. For eight wonderful years, the Bavarians could count on the supreme finishing ability of Robert Lewandowski. Whenever Bayern needed a goal, the Pole duly obliged, netting the absurd total of 344 goals in 375 official fixtures. No wonder fans in Munich are balefully talking about the end of an era.

His worth to Bayern was not merely measured in goals by the truckload. He was a great team man too, securely holding the ball up, combining cleverly in build-up play and serving in decoy mode. While opposition defenders concentrated on the Poland ace, other Bayern forwards would slip into the red zone undetected.

Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann, one of the brightest minds in European football, will now have to earn his corn. Will he adopt a false nine approach, with newly-acquired Sadio Mane or evergreen veteran Thomas Muller wandering with menace? Or will Serge Gnabry receive the centre-forward call? A few years ago, when Nagelsmann was at Hoffenheim, he regularly deployed winger Gnabry as one-half of a striker-duo. Another option would be a two-man front-line of Mane and the up-and-coming Jamal Musiala.

Lewandowski's exit equally means fresh ideas. Nagelsmann can now work on a more flexible strategy, with the attackers freed up from their erstwhile roles of Lewandowski's sidekicks. Going forward, Bayern should be more of a constellation of stars than one shining light.

New-look attack... Sadio Mane will be the new talisman

COACH
Julian Nagelsmann
The 35-year-old has a score to settle in the wake of last season's dismal quarter-final elimination by Villarreal.

KEY MAN
Sadio Mane
It's a rare occurrence indeed for a German outfit to snatch a genuine world-class performer from the Premier League.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Mathys Tel
Bayern saw off lots of competition to sign the 17-year-old French attacker from Rennes for €28.5m.

How will they look defensively with €70m centre-back Matthijs de Ligt?

In a three-man set-up, Dutchman De Ligt is likely to be flanked by the French pairing of Lucas Hernandez and Dayot Upamecano. A back four will feature De Ligt and Hernandez in central defence.

Who will stand in early for the injured Leon Goretzka in midfield?

Dutch tyro Ryan Gravenberch, recruited from Ajax, is an obvious choice, though all will depend on how well he settles in. Experienced Austrian Marcel Sabitzer, who flattered to deceive last season, may also fancy his chances of stepping in.

What plans does Nagelsmann have for *wunderkind* Jamal Musiala?

Musiala underlined his versatility last term with impressive stints in midfield and on the left wing. Nagelsmann now intends to make him a key figure in a 3-5-2 or 3-1-4-2 system, either in a playmaking role or as one of two strikers.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

New coach, same high expectations

PSG's Qatari state paymasters are growing ever impatient. Claiming the Ligue 1 title virtually every year is not what motivates club president Nasser Al Khelaifi and his backers. They aspire to European predominance and it clearly rankles that in 11 years of petro-dollar excess, they have yet to win a single Champions League. The Parisians have come close, especially when losing to Bayern in the 2020 final. But in the final analysis, runners-up honours mean little to the voraciously ambitious Qataris.

Such an obsession only means one thing for coaches at PSG – deliver the Holy Grail or hit the road. A host of big-name bosses – Carlo Ancelotti, Laurent Blanc, Unai Emery and Thomas Tuchel – were all dismissed after failing in their mission, and recently Maurico Pochettino suffered the same fate. The Parisians now have a new sheriff in town in the shape of former Saint-Etienne, Lille and Nice coach Christophe Galtier. Unfortunately for him, European expectations at the Parc des Princes will continue to be sky-high.

Thank goodness then that star man Kylian Mbappe remains on board. The outstanding jet-propelled 23-year-old attacker had seemed certain to respond to Real Madrid's advances, only to perform a spectacular volte-face in late May, signing a three-year contract extension with the Parisians. Apparently the club's dreams of winning the Champions League played a key part in Mbappe's decision.

Paris all-stars...Messi, Neymar, Mbappe and Marquinhos in training

COACH
Christophe Galtier
No-nonsense and authoritarian leader, who earned plenty of brownie points for masterminding Lille's shock French league title win in 2020-21.

KEY MAN
Kylian Mbappe
The word is that French president Emmanuel Macron played a key role in persuading Mbappe to remain at PSG.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Hugo Ekitike
Promising France U20 attacking starlet who arrived on loan from Reims this summer.

Was Galtier PSG's first choice?

According to several sources in the Gallic media, PSG were keen on former Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane, a national icon thanks to his glorious playing career. Instead, rumours abound that Zidane is hoping to replace Didier Deschamps as France manager after the World Cup.

Who will be PSG's No.1 goalkeeper?

Last season, Pochettino gave more or less equal amounts of playing time to Italy's Gianluigi Donnarumma and the Costa Rican Keylor Navas. New coach Galtier wants a clear hierarchy, insisting that Donnarumma is his default starter.

How will the team line up tactically?

Galtier appears keen to ditch 4-3-3 and replace it with a 3-4-1-2. Mbappe and Neymar should lead the line, with Messi weaving his magic just behind them. Last term's 4-3-3 did not give Messi enough scope to do his thing through the middle. This new template may solve the issue.

BARCELONA

New-look team bringing back the glory years

Goal machine...Robert Lewandowski

COACH

Xavi
Nothing short of a living Barca legend. A loyal servant for over three decades, he pulled the strings in 767 competitive matches for the club and was instrumental during a period of unprecedented success at Camp Nou. Took over from Ronald Koeman in November 2021.

KEY MAN

Robert Lewandowski
Poland striker extraordinaire who forced through a €50m move from Bayern. Just turned 34 but in remarkable physical shape.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Gavi
Precocious teenage midfielder blessed with vision, technique, dribbling skills and an excellent positional sense. So composed for an 18-year-old.

Using funds raised by selling off a portion of their future domestic TV rights, Barca have been splashing much of the cash on boosting their attacking options, bringing in former Bayern goal machine Robert Lewandowski and exciting Brazil winger Raphinha from Leeds. For a combined €117m, the *Blaugrana* faithful now have a new Dream Team strikeforce to idolise, a unit that should provide copious amounts of end-product.

The Barca Class of 2022-23 should not be short on firepower. Alongside Lewandowski and Raphinha, Xavi can also turn to the likes of Spain youngsters Ansu Fati and Ferran Torres, newly-retained French winger Ousmane Dembele and Gabon road runner Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

Elimination from the Champions League group phase last season – their worst performance in the competition for 21 years – did not go down well at Camp Nou, and president Joan Laporta has responded by announcing a return to the good old days: "We are positioning Barcelona in the world again," he declared at Lewandowski's unveiling.

Laporta was busy on other deals too, notably completing the free transfers of Danish defender Andreas Christensen from Chelsea and Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie from Milan, and paying €50m for Sevilla defender Jules Kounde.

Are Barcelona now "unbalanced"?

In some ways, yes. In contrast to their glittering array of goalscoring talent, the Catalan club's defensive resources are more thinly spread. The best days of Gerard Pique and Jordi Alba are behind them, while, at right-back, both Sergino Dest and Sergi Roberto have their weaknesses. The arrival of Christensen and Kounde should help enormously.

Which players are under the most pressure with Lewandowski's arrival?

The widely-held assumption is that Barca's starting line-up for 2022-23 will feature Lewandowski flanked by Raphinha and Ousmane Dembele. That leaves Spanish international Torres and former Arsenal goal-getter Aubameyang somewhat out in the cold. Both run the risk of only being rotation stop-gaps.

What's the latest on Ansu Fati?

After spending much of the last two campaigns sidelined with a variety of complicated injuries, the 19-year-old is now fit again. "The Prince" has been working hard in pre-season and just needs match practice. Such a long lay-off inevitably leads to rustiness and mental barriers that have to be overcome.

The Heavyweights

CHELSEA

First campaign of the post-Abramovich era

After 19 years of wall-to-wall success – including two Champions League titles – under Roman Abramovich, a new chapter is about to begin at Stamford Bridge, with a consortium led by US businessman Todd Boehly now in charge.

Sensibly, Boehly has not taken his new broom to the coaching department, offering his full backing to incumbent boss Thomas Tuchel. This has to be a wise move. The German not only is one of the most tactically astute managers in Europe; he is an outstanding team-builder as well, innovative in his ideas and superb on the training ground.

Tuchel is a ruthless pragmatist too, making it clear to Boehly that misfiring big-money striker Romelu Lukaku had to be off-loaded, allowing the Belgian international to return on loan to former club Internazionale. Also to depart were central defenders Antonio Rudiger and Andreas Christensen, who both exited for Spain. The incomings include former Manchester City ace Raheem Sterling and Napoli stopper Kalidou Koulibaly, who after so many years of speculation has finally landed a Premier League move.

New signing... Raheem Sterling

Many pundits will be expecting Chelsea to be less of a force in the post-Abramovich era. However they may end up disappointed. The shrewd Tuchel still has his hands on the wheel and the squad remains jam-packed with talent and experience. The Blues will be expecting to go deep into this season's Champions League. And rightly so.

COACH

Thomas Tuchel
PSG and Dortmund must still wonder what possessed them to fire him. Masterminded the Blues' CL triumph in 2020-21.

KEY MAN

Mason Mount
Never mind the keyboard warriors who lambast him – the midfielder is a real class act.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Conor Gallagher
Super midfielder, who is now back at HQ following a shining-light loan spell at Crystal Palace.

What will Sterling bring to the table?

Aside from bags of experience at the highest level and a substantial record as a proven goalscorer, Sterling opens up several new tactical options for Tuchel. Able to use his dribbling skills and pace on the wing or through the middle, the England man could help turn Chelsea's front-line into a well-oiled machine.

How important are the wing-backs?

Reece James and Ben Chilwell are vital to Tuchel's system, providing dynamism, ball-progression and adeptness at arriving in the opposition box. Sadly for Chelsea, they missed a large chunk of last season through injury – hence the signing of left-back Marc Cucurella from Brighton.

Can we expect any changes in shape?

The advantages of 3-4-2-1 are its stable defensive base, plus the variety of passing lanes it opens up going forward. Tuchel did use a 4-3-3 on occasion last term, but for the most part it did not work.

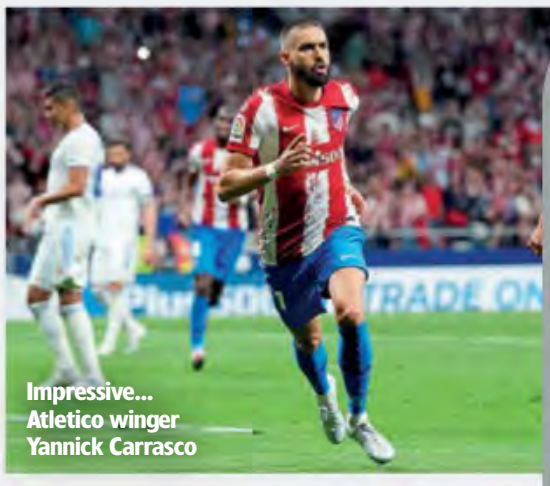
ATLETICO MADRID

Rejuvenation required for Atleti

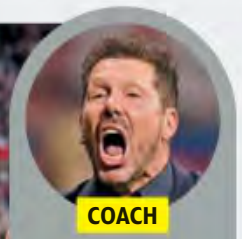
About to start their 13th Champions League campaign, Atleti are not, it has to be said, in the best of shape. Last season, their La Liga title defence never got off the ground, hampered by two exceedingly rare occurrences: a defence that regularly went AWOL, and coach Diego Simeone's inexplicable failure to find a settled playing system. What's more, money is extremely tight.

Given the financial restraints, it's hardly a surprise that Atletico have barely caused a ripple in the recruitment pool, limiting their purchases to Argentine right-back Nahuel Molina (ex-Udinese) and Belgian defensive midfielder Axel Witsel (free from Dortmund). Witsel, 33, will be taking over shielding duties from Hector Herrera, who split on a free transfer to MLS' Houston Dynamo, while midfielder Saul Niguez and striker Alvaro Morata are back after spells on loan at Chelsea and Juventus respectively.

Much of the media talk here has centred on big-name players, with striker Luis Suarez leaving for boyhood club Nacional in Montevideo and gossip galore that Atleti were preparing a swoop for Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo. The *Colchoneros* faithful, however, were not at all impressed, even going as far as to unfurl a "CR7 Not Welcome" banner at a pre-season friendly. "I don't know who invented this story about Cristiano, but it is practically impossible for him to come," declared club president Enrique Cerezo.



Impressive... Atletico winger Yannick Carrasco



COACH

Diego Simeone
With Atletico for the past 11 years, "*El Cholo*" is, according to the French daily *L'Equipe*, the highest-paid coach in Europe.

KEY MAN

Angel Correa
Atletico's top goalscorer last term, the 27-year-old Argentine rarely receives the credit he deserves.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Joao Felix
Should, along with Matheus Cunha, get more opportunities to impress following Luis Suarez's exit.

Will Molina go straight into the XI?

Probably. With two regular right-backs (Kieran Trippier and Sime Vrsaljko) flying the nest in the last nine months, Atletico are not exactly awash with good options. Versatile midfielder Marcos Llorente will be second choice.

Can Yannick Carrasco maintain his excellent productivity from last term?

Why not? The Belgian took his game to a higher dimension last term and, boosted by the knowledge that he is now one of Simeone's untouchables, he could go on to hit even greater heights. Simeone loves his ability to play anywhere in attack.

Any central defensive doubts?

First-choice picks Stefan Savic and Jose Maria Gimenez are strong enough as a pairing, but they do tend to suffer more than their fair share of muscular injuries. Conversely, Reinildo, a 28-year-old from Mozambique, seems to be moving up the pecking order with a vengeance.

JUVENTUS

Determined to rival Europe's elite

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri, twice a Champions League runner-up with the Turin club in 2014-15 and 2016-17, has one overarching goal in this season's competition: to push the *Bianconeri* further up the continental pecking order. Following three straight round-of-16 exits, Juventus' standing in the European game has taken a real hit. With nine final appearances, but only two trophies to show for it, the Old Lady is in dire need of a European tour de force.

At the heart of the Juve relaunch this summer was a major injection of marquee know-how, the free transfers of French midfielder Paul Pogba from Manchester United and the Argentine winger Angel Di Maria from Paris Saint-Germain. The pair will be on familiar turf in the Champions League: together they have appeared in over 150 games in the competition.

Not that all has gone to plan. Pogba, who sparkled in Turin between 2012 and 2016, now faces a lengthy spell on the sidelines with a damaged lateral meniscus in his right-knee. Suddenly his return to his former club does not look such a good idea.

Elite experience... summer signing Angel Di Maria

The final curtain of last season was very much the end of an era at Juve. After 18 years manning the club's castle ramparts, trusty old centre-back Giorgio Chiellini, 38, announced his decision to walk away, eventually linking up with Los Angeles FC in Major League Soccer; how Juve will miss his commitment to keeping the ball out their net at any cost. He will be replaced by Brazilian Bremer, who signed on from crosstown rivals Torino in a €41m deal.

COACH

Massimiliano Allegri
This autumn, Allegri is due to clock up his 100th game as a Champions League manager. He has also managed SPAL, Grosseto, Sassuolo, Cagliari and Milan.

KEY MAN

Dusan Vlahovic
Outstanding Serb striker, who Juve snatched from bitter rivals Fiorentina early this year for €80m.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Fabio Miretti
A 19-year-old playmaker with the X factor. The brains of Italy's U19 side.

Will Federico Chiesa be available after rupturing knee ligaments in February?

Following successful reconstruction surgery, the gifted Italy winger has been busy in rehab and is slated to be back in action early in September, just in time for Juventus' important midweek dates. Obviously, Juve will be keen not to over-use him initially. Will likely only be fully operational after the World Cup break.

Where are Juventus weakest?

Probably at left-back, where neither Alex Sandro nor his usual back-up Luca Pellegrini have shown convincing form. Too inconsistent, too susceptible to lapses in concentration. The solution may be to switch Mattia De Sciglio from right-back to the other side of the pitch.

Will Juventus regret allowing Paulo Dybala to join Roma for free?

While the Argentine second striker was a highly productive figure for Juve in his first four or five years, his output numbers over the last two seasons were just not sufficient. Injuries took their toll and he repeatedly failed to shine in the Champions League. Juve probably were justified in cutting their losses.

INTERNAZIONALE

Austerity reigns for Italian giants

"The financial sustainability of the club is our absolute priority." As general manager Beppe Marotta recently pointed out, the harsh truth is that the *Nerazzurri* simply do not have the economic resources to spend, spend, spend in the transfer market. Austerity is the order of the day for Inter right now and that means cutting their cloth accordingly.

Missing out on transfer targets was very much a trend at Inter in the off-season. After agreeing personal terms with Torino centre-back Bremer, negotiations over the fee dragged on for so long that Juventus were able to hijack the deal. And it was the same story in the hunt for out-of-contract Juventus forward Paulo Dybala. The *Nerazzurri* were thought to be in pole position to sign the mercurial Argentine, but just could not get the deal completed, hampered by a failure to offload a number of big-earners. With Inter stalling over Dybala, Roma gleefully moved in to agree terms with the player.

Such bungled recruitment attempts left the *Nerazzurri* faithful holding their heads in frustration. But at least the fans had the good news of the return to the club of Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku,

Reunited... strike partners Romelu Lukaku and Lautaro Martinez

brought in on a 12-month loan deal from Chelsea. Lukaku was nothing less than sensational for Inter in the 2020-21 season, contributing 24 domestic league goals to the club's conquest of the Italian title. The restoration of Lukaku – and the rekindling of his strike partnership with Lautaro Martinez – has given everyone a lift. Inter also have brought in the much-travelled Armenian creator Henrikh Mkhitaryan, from Roma, and Cameroon goalkeeper Andre Onana from Ajax.

COACH

Simone Inzaghi
Inzaghi has limited CL experience in the technical area with only two campaigns under his belt: one at Lazio in 2020-21 and last term at Inter.

KEY MAN

Marcelo Brozovic
The Croat midfielder is the guy who makes Inter tick, outstanding in his vision, passing range and energy.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Kristjan Asllani
Born in Albania but raised in Tuscany, the 20-year-old can operate in a variety of midfield roles.

Can Lukaku and Martinez rekindle their magical partnership of 2020-21?

There is no reason why not. They used to enjoy a telepathic understanding and complemented one another perfectly; Lukaku's pace and power dovetailing superbly with Martinez's cute movement and gutsy competitiveness. This was a duo that worked like a dream.

Can wing-backs Denzel Dumfries and Robin Gosens improve on last season?

The duo enjoyed contrasting fortunes after arriving last season. Dutchman Dumfries started slowly, but increasingly came more and more into his own, impressing with his surging advances along the right flank. On the left, German international Gosens, who arrived from Atalanta in January, had a hamstring injury and looked out of sorts when he did play.

Can Onana supplant Slovenia's Samir Handanovic as the team's No.1?

It's a tough ask. Handanovic is, after all, Inter captain and has been first-choice for a decade. Onana, however, is no mere back-up having proved himself over many years as a great sweeper-keeper for Ajax.

The Dark Horses

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

A team transformed under Antonio Conte

Without charismatic coach Antonio Conte in the hot seat, Tottenham would not have come close to qualifying for the Champions League. Spurs were a dead duck under his predecessor Nuno Espirito Santo, but in just six months the Italian manager produced a sensational turnaround in North London, transforming a dysfunctional mid-table side into a gritty, well-organised and vibrant collective whole.

Conte, never one to hide his feelings, insists that his employers back him in the transfer market, and he seems satisfied with the newcomers brought in this summer. The list of recruits has something for all tastes: the guile and directness of ex-Everton attacker Richarlison, the all-action approach of former Brighton midfielder Yves Bissouma, the incisiveness of Ivan Perisic (ex-Internazionale) on the left-wing and the solidity of French centre-back Clement Lenglet (Barcelona).

The mastermind of domestic league crowns with Chelsea, Juventus and Inter, Conte has never hit the same heights as a coach in Europe. Indeed, in five Champions League campaigns, he has reached the quarter-finals only once (with Juventus in 2011-12). This lack of results has to change.

Where will the fiercest competition for places be?

The left-sided midfielder/wing-back role will see Ryan Sessegnon and new arrival Ivan Perisic butt heads. Croatian Perisic, who has now recovered from a problematic calf injury, offers huge experience at the highest level, while Sessegnon is the young gun finally living up to the boy wonder tag he enjoyed at Fulham as a teenager.

Apart from Harry Kane and Son Heung-min, where is Tottenham's Champions League quality?

The defensive unit. Unsurprisingly for an Italian coach, Conte puts a premium on a tight defence and was delighted with the way his side functioned in the second half of last season: they ended the term with the fourth-best defensive record in the league, with Cristian Romero and Eric Dier in particular shining.

COACH

Antonio Conte
Infamous for not overstaying his welcome, Conte has hinted that he wants to stay at Tottenham beyond his current deal, which expires in 2023. A defensive midfielder in the Juventus side that won the 1995-96 Champions League.

KEY MAN

Harry Kane
Spurs marksman supreme and club talisman has 19 Champions League goals in just 23 games.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Djed Spence
Forceful, energetic right-back signed from Middlesbrough after a superb season on loan at Nottingham Forest last campaign.

Deadly strike partnership ...Son Heung-min and Harry Kane

Could this be Kane's last season in a Tottenham Hotspur shirt?

Given that Kane's current contract runs out in July 2024 and that at the minute he lools unlikely to negotiate a new one, the summer transfer window of 2023 will be Spurs' only chance of selling him for big money. Would chairman Daniel Levy be prepared to see Kane walk away for free in 2024? Doubtful.

MILAN

Keen for improvement

Above all else in 2022-23, the *Rossoneri*, Italian champions for the first time in over a decade last campaign, will be desperate to improve on their disastrous showing in last season's Champions League, when they finished bottom in their group behind Liverpool, Atletico Madrid and Porto. The campaign was a complete train wreck, with Stefano Pioli's side losing four games and winning just once. For a club that has claimed seven European Cups, this was a humiliating reminder that Milan are no longer part of the continental elite.

Milan's European glory days of the late 1980s and '90s were underlined by the lavish spending sprees of owner Silvio Berlusconi. These days, though, Milan have to be considerably more frugal in their personnel choices. "I don't like talking about budgets, but if Liverpool or a Manchester City can spend €100m, it's difficult to compete," declared Pioli at a recent press conference. "We cannot think of Milan being a possible winner of the Champions League."

Pioli insists his team have learnt a lot from their travails in Europe last term and that they have gained in quality and experience. They were unstoppable in the Serie A run-in, winning each of their last six games to clinch their first Italian league crown since 2010-11. The atmosphere in the dressing room and in the stands is buoyant to say the least. They could not wish for a better platform to bounce back in Europe.

Vital...Milan front man Giroud

COACH
Stefano Pioli
Won the Champions Cup with Juventus aged just 19. Voted Serie A's Coach of the Season after winning the league with Milan, his eighth top-flight team in Italy.

KEY MAN
Rafael Leao
The goalscoring Portuguese winger was a cornerstone of Milan's shock league triumph.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Pierre Kalulu
No Milan player made more strides last season than the French U21 defender.

How important are Milan's senior pros to the club and its dynamics?

Crucial. If the side's younger elements are blooming at the moment, it's mainly due to the inspirational work of role-model strikers Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Olivier Giroud (40 and 35 respectively), French keeper Mike Maignan – who some consider a better custodian than current national team No.1 Hugo Lloris – and right-back Alessandro Florenzi.

Who is the team's emotional leader?

While Zlatan remains a huge influence, French left-back Theo Hernandez is even more of a motivator. Coach Pioli describes him as possessing the "wrath of God". Strength and determination personified, he memorably netted a thrilling solo goal against Atalanta in May.

Is the hype around Belgian starlet Charles De Ketelaere warranted?

Up to a point. The 21-year-old is a brilliant technician and can play in a number of roles – attacking midfield, forward or winger – but he still has a lot to learn. He only has eight full caps for Belgium and boasts a mere two Champions League campaigns with Club Brugge.

SEVILLA

Europa League specialists hoping for more

No wonder the Sevilla fans were so ecstatic after clinching fourth place in La Liga last season. Not only had they qualified for their third consecutive Champions League, they had done so at the expense of neighbours Betis, who ended the campaign one place behind.

Now the goal is to emulate their best-ever Champions League performance (a quarter-final spot in 2017-18). More often than not, the round of 16 has proved Sevilla's ceiling. Last term, they did not even progress beyond the group stage, winning just one game. Nevertheless they do still boast an excellent European pedigree, with six Europa League titles this century.

Expertly led and drilled by coach Julen Lopetegui, Sevilla are extremely hard to outmanoeuvre. Beaten only four times in La Liga last term, they are solid and consistent. It's no coincidence that they made a habit of winning games by a single-goal margin in 2021-22. Their game-management skills are excellent.

Unfortunately, the 2022 off-season has been one of huge disappointment. Arguably their two most important players, centre-backs Jules Kounde and Diego Carlos, have both departed for pastures new – Frenchman Kounde joining Barcelona and Brazilian Carlos heading for Aston Villa in the Premier League. Fellow Brazilian stopper Marcao, purchased for €12m from Galatasaray, has a tough task in replacing them.

European experience... Ivan Rakitic

COACH
Julen Lopetegui
The Basque boss has done an exceptional job of establishing Sevilla in La Liga's top four since taking over in 2019.

KEY MAN
Bono
Moroccan keeper who achieved fame last year by scoring a dramatic late equaliser against Valladolid.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Pedro Ortiz
The midfielder is the latest talent to roll off the conveyor belt at Sevilla's wonderful academy system.

What are head coach Julen Lopetegui's priorities?

Out of possession, Lopetegui wants his team to press high and force mistakes in dangerous areas. Sevilla's identity is all about energy, vigour, aggression, quick counter-attacks and defensive efficiency. In their usual 4-3-3 formation, the emphasis is on ball retention and attacking rapidly via the flanks.

Where did the Andalusian outfit go wrong last season?

An ineffective pressing game. From front to back, their efforts to win the ball back quickly when out of possession lacked intensity and resolve, making them too easy to play through. Going forward, they tended to be too predictable, often resorting to long balls.

What could be Sevilla's secret weapon this season?

After suffering countless injuries last term, Sevilla's sporting director Monchi decided to shake up the club's medical staff, appointing Dr Salvador Castillo as new medical chief. A fitter Sevilla could be a more successful Sevilla.

The Dark Horses

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Dealt a hammer blow by devastating diagnosis

Get well soon, Sebastien. Diagnosed with testicular cancer just a fortnight after joining Dortmund from Ajax, Ivory Coast striker Haller promptly underwent treatment and posted an update on social media to inform fans on the first steps of his recovery. The 28-year-old will miss at least part of the autumnal Champions League programme. "It's so awful for a player to be in training and then to suffer this," said Dortmund CEO, Hans-Joachim Watzke. "What's important is that Sebastien is healthy again."

Haller's illness and unavailability is a real blow to Dortmund. Following the exit of Erling Haaland, the Dortmund brass deliberated for several months before choosing Haller as the Norwegian's successor. And it seemed to make good sense too, especially when looking at Haller's goalscoring numbers last season (34 goals in all competitions for Ajax, including 11 in the Champions League).

Plan B has been to turn to 34-year-old Anthony Modeste, who scored 20 Bundesliga goals for Cologne last season – his best return since 2016-17 when he netted 25 for the Billy Goats – but he has never played in the Champions League. Dortmund's hopes are likely to rely on one of three things: a quick recovery for Haller, a rapid adjustment by Modeste, or someone else entirely stepping up to the goalscoring plate: perhaps young go-getters Karim Adeyemi or Youssoufa Moukoko, or perhaps experienced skipper Marco Reus.

Teenage midfielder... Bellingham

COACH
Edin Terzic
Dortmund from head to toe, having served the club in virtually every capacity: scout, youth team coach, technical director and caretaker boss.

KEY MAN
Jude Bellingham
The precocious midfielder is already hugely influential at Dortmund, appointed third captain in July.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Nico Schlotterbeck
Top defensive prospect with tenacity, awareness and ball-skills.

What can we expect from Terzic?

Dortmund's new head coach is a larger than life character, who wears his heart on his sleeve. His team are bound to reflect this exuberance and commitment. A fine motivator, he will make sure his charges remain hungry and consistent.

Have they sorted out the defence?

The signing of outstanding centre-backs Nico Schlotterbeck and Niklas Sule – who surprisingly quit Bayern for BVB – can only bolster a unit that used to have an alarming habit of springing leaks. With Terzic usually preferring a back four, veteran defender Mats Hummels will likely resort to back-up.

In which areas must they improve?

Their pressing game has to be more intense and better co-ordinated, they have to be more dynamic and ruthless out of possession, and for far too long the Black-and-Yellows have conceded too many goals from set-pieces.

AJAX

Total rebuild

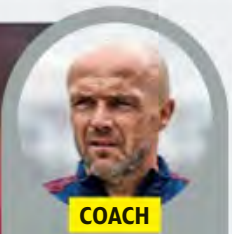
The Dutch champions lost a great deal of talent this summer. The list of outgoing transfers include midfielder Ryan Gravenberch, right-back Noussair Mazraoui (both to Bayern), defender Lisandro Martinez (Manchester United), striker Sebastian Haller (Dortmund) and left-back Nicolas Tagliafico (Lyon), not to mention the exit of coach Erik ten Hag.

Few clubs could survive such a haemorrhage of ability. But if any organisation can fight back it's Ajax, home to one of the best academies in world football. In addition to the core of class that remains – centre-back Jurrien Timber, midfielders Steven Berghuis and Davy Klaassen and wingers Antony and Dusan Tadic – the Amsterdammers have spent judiciously on new signings, using a large proportion of the €100m raised.

The new guys on the block include the much-coveted AZ left-back Owen Wijndal, ex-Rangers defender Calvin Bassey and Netherlands winger Steven Bergwijn from Tottenham. A permanent deal was also struck with RB Leipzig for young striker Brian Brobbey, who spent the second half of last season on loan in Amsterdam.

Much will depend on how quickly new coach Alfred Schreuder manages to get his message across to the players. Even his most vociferous backers would have to admit that his career as a head coach is patchy, with last season's Belgian title at Club Brugge his only honour.

New-look team...Steven Bergwijn will lead the attack



COACH
Alfred Schreuder
The 49-year-old has a better CV as an assistant, working under Steve McClaren and Ronald Koeman. This is the biggest test of his career.

KEY MAN
Dusan Tadic
Tremendously gifted playmaker, winger or false nine. A key figure in the run to the last four in 2018-19.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Owen Wijndal
Recently acquired from AZ, the 22-year-old describes himself as the "best left-back in the Eredivisie."

Will this term be Timber's last at Ajax?

Probably. The brilliant young centre-back almost joined Manchester United this summer, only for Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal to discourage him. LVG apparently warned Timber that he would not be considered for the World Cup if not playing regularly for United.

Who has the highest expectations?

Undoubtedly new attacking signing Steven Bergwijn, who has just arrived from Tottenham for over €30m, a record signing. Previously their previous most expensive purchase was Haller, signed from West Ham United for €22.5m.

Who will replace Ryan Gravenberch as the box-to-box midfielder?

The signs are that homegrown youngster Kenneth Taylor, 20, will assume the role. Taylor, a Dutch Under-21 international, recently extended his contract with the club until 2027 and, symbolically, also took Gravenberch's old No.8 shirt.

PORTO

Starting from scratch again

Strangely for a club whose results have been more than satisfactory over the last five years – winning three domestic league titles and thrice competing in the springtime phase of the Champions League, a substantial section of Porto's supporters are unhappy. The cause of their ire? An ever-growing feeling that club president Pinto da Costa is not doing enough to retain the team's best players.

During the course of the last year or so, Da Costa has sold star names with abandon, cashing in on the highly marketable likes of Danilo Pereira and Vitinha (both Paris Saint-Germain), Fabio Vieira (Arsenal), Luis Diaz (Liverpool) and Francisco Conceicao – the son of current Dragons coach Sergio Conceicao – who was lured away by Ajax.

Pinto da Costa would not win any popularity contests at the moment. Some fans are pointing out that Benfica received more from Liverpool for striker Darwin Nunez than Porto banked from the combined sales of Vitinha, Fabio Vieira and Conceicao junior (€81.5m). Others claim Da Costa has reneged on last year's promise to give long-term contracts to the Porto youngsters that helped Portugal Under-21s finish second at the 2021 European Championship.

New faces include centre-back David Carmo, a €20m signing from Braga, and young Brazilian winger Gabriel Veron, a rising star of South American champions Palmeiras.

Leading the line ...Mehdi Taremi

COACH

Sergio Conceicao
All or nothing is the Porto boss' credo and without his fiery press conferences, Portuguese football undeniably would be the poorer.

KEY MAN

Pepe
Elusive left-sided midfielder who has become influential since arriving from Gremio last year.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Diogo Costa
The 22-year-old Portugal keeper has the potential to even outstrip legendary custodian Vitor Baia.

After a summer of departures, is this a season of transition?

Sergio Conceicao will move heaven and Earth to make sure standards do not slip. Half-measures are not his style, and evergreen central defender and skipper Pepe will no doubt assist him in establishing an "us against the world" vibe. Conceicao loves the challenge of reinventing his team each season.

How good an acquisition is Brazilian wonderkid winger Gabriel Veron?

Porto pulled off a real coup by luring the 20-year-old winger from Palmeiras for only €10m. Player of the Tournament at the 2019 Under-17 World Cup – where Brazil won a fourth title – Veron has electrifying skills and poses substantial threat cutting inside from the flank.

What is the biggest strength of Sergio Conceicao's team?

Never-say-die spirit. The Dragons only lost one league game last season, with a 3-2 win over Estoril in January providing the perfect example of their refusal to lie down, fighting back from 2-0 down to win 3-2. Rapidly executed transitions are another major plus point.

RB LEIPZIG

Riding a wave of momentum

Crucially, Leipzig enter the new season on a wave of confidence. The way the team went from flat-lining to qualifying for the Champions League and winning the German Cup under new coach Domenico Tedesco has given everyone a huge boost. "We are not interested in just taking part in the Champions League," said Leipzig chief executive Oliver Mintzlaff. "Our goal is at least to be present in the knockout phase."

RB will take great heart from their impressive recent European track record: they beat Tottenham and Atletico Madrid en route to the Champions League last four in 2019-20, reached the last 16 the following season, and made it to the semis in last term's Europa League.

May's Cup final was a match that demonstrated RB's toughness too: trailing from the 19th minute, down to ten men in the 57th and then down to nine in the 118th, they clung on to overcome Freiburg on penalties. It was the club's first taste of silverware since winning the fourth tier in 2014, and they want more.

The most productive team in Germany in the post-Christmas period, RB wisely have kept most of the first team relatively intact. Only three new signings of note have come in: highly-rated Austrian engine-room warrior Xaver Schlager from Wolfsburg, Hoffenheim and Germany left wing-back David Raum and the returning Chelsea flop Timo Werner.

Midfield sensation... Christopher Nkunku

COACH

Domenico Tedesco
Italian-German boss. Top of the Class of 2016 at Germany's coaching academy, his previous clubs include Schalke and Spartak Moscow.

KEY MAN

Christopher Nkunku
The 24-year-old Frenchman was in sensational form for RB last term, with 32 goals and 20 assists in all competitions.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Mohamed Simakan
Laid-back defender off the pitch, yet ferociously committed in the heat of battle.

What is coach Domenico Tedesco's tactical philosophy?

Whether using a 3-4-1-2 or a 3-4-2-1, Tedesco stays true to a number of key tenets: positional flexibility in attack, well-drilled pressing, and protecting the centre of the pitch to force opponents out wide. In terms of structure and organisation, nothing is left to chance.

In which department are RB the strongest and most well stocked?

Arguably defensive midfield, where Tedesco can count on Schlager, fellow Austrian Konrad Laimer, ex-Slovenia international Kevin Kampl and Malian action man Amadou Haidara. This unit sets the tone for Leipzig; when they are firing, so is the whole team.

What inspired Leipzig to splash out €26m for David Raum?

Quite simply the 24-year-old is the most accomplished performer in his position in the Bundesliga. He is almost impossible to stop in one-on-one duels, is extremely accurate in his crossing, and adds physicality and mental toughness to the Leipzig ranks.

Targeting the last 16

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT

Europa League champions stepping up

Delighted to be in the Champions League mix for the first time in their history, Eintracht will be hoping to build on the momentum of their Europa League triumph last season, their first continental trophy since claiming the UEFA Cup in 1979-80.

The Eagles could certainly use the forthcoming Champions League windfall (expected to be €30m plus); despite their moment in the Europa League sun in Seville, Frankfurt still made a loss of €23m last season, mainly as a result of COVID-enforced crowd restrictions. A reasonable showing in the Champions League would put the club back on a much sounder financial footing.

All of a sudden, Eintracht are a reference point in Germany, a team to respect and take seriously. One only has to look at the European honours board of German clubs; other than Bayern Munich, Eintracht are the only Bundesliga club to have bagged a continental trophy in the last 25 years.

"Our goal in the Champions League is to reach the knockout stage and we won't wave the white flag if we get there," says coach Oliver Glasner.

Europa League winners ...celebrate after beating Rangers in last season's final

COACH
Oliver Glasner
Last season, his first with Eintracht, the euphoria of winning the Europa League contrasted with a decidedly poor mid-table finish in the Bundesliga.

KEY MAN
Daichi Kamada
Normally a visionary No.10, the Japan ace is tipped to switch to a more deep-lying role this season.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Ansgar Knauff
Exciting right wing-back on loan from Dortmund.

What are the basics of Oilver Glasner's coaching philosophy?

His side is very close-knit and well co-ordinated, with every player in the starting XI knowing exactly what is expected of them. In transition, they swiftly spring into action, bursting forward with conviction or immediately looking to hunt the ball back after suffering a turnover.

Are Eintracht taking a gamble on signing Mario Gotze from PSV?

Despite scoring the winning goal in the 2014 World Cup final, many in Germany still regard the 30-year-old attacking midfielder as one of the most glaring examples of unfulfilled potential, someone who initially shone like the Northern Lights before being plagued with injury and loss of form. Such an assessment is only partially correct. In Eindhoven, his station for the last two seasons, he was outstanding.

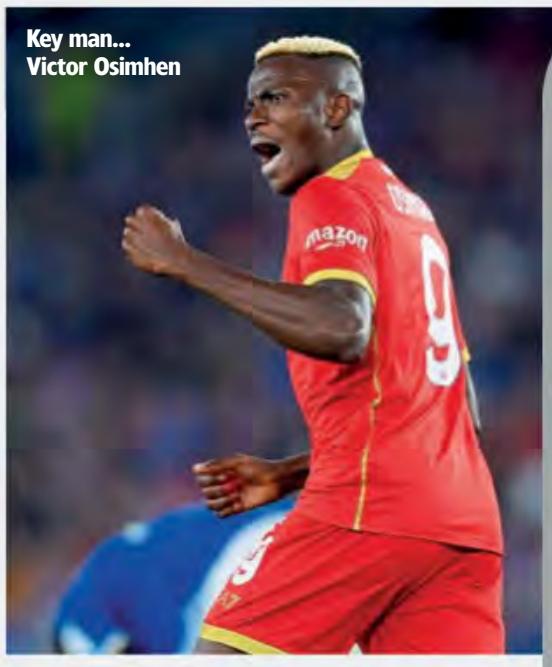
NAPOLI

A new Neapolitan era

A major team overhaul is underway in the football-mad city of Naples after four of the Sky Blues' most significant performers departed the scene. Centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly signed for Chelsea, winger Lorenzo Insigne made tracks for Toronto, false nine Dries Mertens was released (later signing for Galatasaray), and keeper David Ospina left for Saudi Arabia. In one fell swoop, Napoli have lost a combined 30 seasons of service to their cause.

Coach Luciano Spalletti, who guided them to a creditable third place in last season's Serie A, will have his work cut out to maintain their competitiveness, to work on a new winning blend. But don't write him off; he's a meticulous organiser, an incredibly hard worker and produces the sort of exciting teams that players naturally embrace. What's more, his perfectionist ideas on collective movement and compactness should be just what the doctor ordered in a time of massive reconstruction.

Spalletti cannot wait for Napoli's first European elite mission in three years. "The Champions League is like the perfect wave for a surfer," said Spalletti. "It's the most important opportunity to measure yourself against the best."



Key man... Victor Osimhen

COACH
Luciano Spalletti
The 63-year-old boasts 57 games as a coach at this level, with the last coming four years ago.

KEY MAN
Victor Osimhen
Strong and pacy Nigerian striker whose runs from deep can cause all sorts of problems.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Khvicha Kvaratskhelia
Newly-arrived Georgian winger, tasked with replacing Lorenzo Insigne. Expressive and bold.

Of all the new Napoli signings, who faces the biggest challenge?

The South Korean centre-back Kim Min-jae, bought for €18m from Fenerbahce, has a huge job ahead of him: plugging the hole left by the departure of long-serving Senegalese international Koulibaly. Still relatively unknown in the European mainstream, Kim does have an awful lot going for him, especially his physicality and technical ability, and will want to settle in quickly ahead of the World Cup.

Do Napoli have a weakness in goal?

First-choice custodian Alex Meret is not without his strong points. He is a fine shot-stopper and also earns top marks for his positioning and appreciation of angles, as well as his total command of his back-line. Once described by Italian goalkeeping legend Dino Zoff as "destined for greatness," Meret can, however, let himself down with his carelessness on the ball.

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

Ambitious and on the up

Never mind their recent shock defeat to third-tier Elversberg in the German Cup, Leverkusen deserve the utmost respect. They finished third in the Bundesliga last season, proving particularly strong in key away games – winning at Dortmund and RB Leipzig, and drawing with Bayern – and were a juggernaut in the second half of the season, producing their best post-Christmas points haul (36) in two decades.

Their best off-season business was extending the contracts of their two most important players: Czech striker Patrik Schick and teenage attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz, who suffered an ACL injury in March. Sadly, he is only likely to return in November.

"One of the best"...Leverkusen striker Patrik Schick

COACH
Gerardo Seoane
Made his name at Young Boys, where he masterminded a hat-trick of Swiss league titles.

KEY MAN
Patrik Schick
Rudi Voller calls him "one of the best strikers in the world".

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Piero Hincapie
Ecuadorian, who is the latest in a long line of South American imports at Bayer.

How will their young back-line cope?
Individually and collectively, they can be naive. On the flip side, the likes of Piero Hincapie, Edmond Tapsoba and Jeremy Frimpong are improving fast. A lot of responsibility is on the shoulders of centre-back Jonathan Tah who, at 26, is the "senior" figure at the back.

Where will Adam Hlozek line up?
The 20-year-old Czech, acquired from Sparta Prague, has experience in all manner of attacking, but he may well replace the injured Wirtz in the No.10 role. Management at Leverkusen are convinced his versatility and goalscoring will augment their attacking options.

MARSEILLE

Background chaos threatens chances

Bad blood in the boardroom is never far from the surface at the Stade Velodrome, and the toxicity was in full flow again this summer, with Argentine coach Jorge Sampaoli walking out on the club just two days into pre-season, having steered Marseille to second place in Ligue 1.

President Pablo Longoria considered moves for Shakhtar Donetsk's Roberto De Zerbi, ex-Valencia and Athletic Bilbao boss Marcelino, and Julien Stephan of Strasbourg. Ultimately, though, he opted for the former PAOK, Galatasaray, Hajduk Split, Udinese and latterly Verona coach, Igor Tudor. Local media have reported that certain players are already unhappy with the Croat's tough, disciplined style.

Ex-Arsenal... Guendouzi and Nuno Tavares

COACH
Igor Tudor
Played in the 2003 final when Juve lost on penalties to Milan.

KEY MAN
Matteo Guendouzi
The ex-Arsenal man is OM's driving force.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Isaak Toure
Giant 19-year-old centre-back recently signed from Le Havre.

Will they badly miss William Saliba?
Saliba, who recently returned to Arsenal following a successful loan, barely put a foot wrong last season. It speaks volumes that OM signed three replacements for him at centre-back: Samuel Gigot, Chancel Mbemba and Isaak Toure.

Who is the most impressive of Marseille's summer recruits?
Right-sided midfielder or full-back Jonathan Clauss, who was lured away from Lens. A wonderful counter-attacker with lashings of pace and technical ability, the 29-year-old is a late developer, only earning his first senior France cap last year. A bargain at just €7.5m.

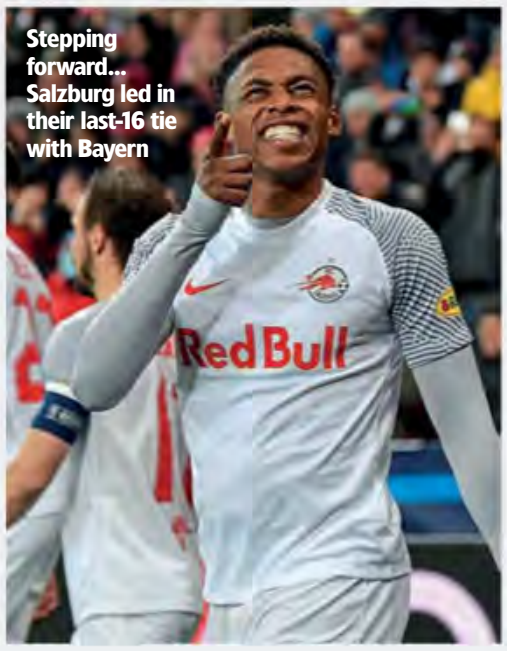
RED BULL SALZBURG

Ready for another step forward

The days when Salzburg couldn't buy a Champions League slot – falling 11 times in the preliminaries – are long gone. Thanks to Austria's rise in the UEFA coefficient rankings, the country's champions have automatically qualified for the group stage since 2019 and Salzburg's progress has accelerated.

Their strength is maintaining their edge while selling their best players. This year, striker Karim Adeyemi joined Dortmund, and Leeds United snapped up Brenden Aaronson and Rasmus Kristensen.

Among the young guns checking in is versatile forward Fernando, previously with Shakhtar Donetsk, and the Brazilian announced his arrival by scoring on his Austrian Bundesliga debut.



Stepping forward... Salzburg led in their last-16 tie with Bayern

COACH
Matthias Jaissle
Excelled as a youth coach with Salzburg and feeder club Liefering.

KEY MAN
Noah Okafor
Resourceful striker who hit three goals in last season's CL.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Lucas Gourna-Douath
Teenage midfielder who joined from Saint-Etienne.

Who will be the main man up top to replace the goals of Karim Adeyemi?
The most likely candidate is Benjamin Sesko, a 19-year-old Slovenian with a big future. He has agreed to join sister club Leipzig next summer for a fee of £55m so will be keen to impress. The other contenders are the aforementioned Fernando and Swiss starlet Noah Okafor.

Who'll be the next talent to emerge?
Danish Under-21 attacking midfielder Maurits Kjaergaard is shaping up very nicely indeed. The tall 19-year-old is extremely creative, has a great left foot, and manages to combine elegance with work-rate. Plus he scores goals. Recently extended his Salzburg contract to 2026.

The Outsiders

SHAKHTAR DONETSK

Playing on against all the odds

Amidst the barbarity of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Shakhtar face an uncertain future. With no domestic championship to take part in for the first half of the year and no stadium to call their own, their squad has effectively become a group of wanderers, holding summer training camps in the Netherlands and Slovenia. In the Champions League, Shakhtar will host games at Legia Warsaw's Wojske Polskiego stadium, while hopping between Kyiv and Lviv in the league.

How is Shakhtar's squad looking after so many departures?

Shakhtar say that FIFA's ruling that foreign players in Ukraine could suspend their contracts cost them €50m in lost transfer fees. Traditionally, they have packed their squad with Brazilian imports, but this summer the likes of Dodo, Marquinhos Cipriano, Marcos Antonio, David Neres, Alan Patrick and Fernando have departed. What's left is an almost entirely Ukrainian squad, including many academy products.

Captain...Taras Stepanenko during one of Shakhtar's summer friendlies

COACH

Igor Jovicevic
When Roberto De Zerbi left the club in July, Shakhtar swiftly turned to the former coach of Karpaty Lviv, Dnipro, and Dinamo Zagreb.

KEY MAN

Taras Stepanenko
The indomitable defensive midfielder, 33, is one of the most experienced players left at Shakhtar. The team's on-field coach.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Anatoliy Trubin
Outstanding 21-year-old goalkeeper, who made his Champions League debut in a 3-2 win at Real Madrid in October 2020.

SPORTING

Young and on the up

The Lisbon-based Lions are very much on the up. Portuguese champions in 2020-21 and praiseworthy runners-up last term, they have finished in Portugal's top two for the first time since 2009. Essentially, this is a team built on two pillars: insistence on a clear identity as outlined by coach Ruben Amorim, and a world-class academy system, producing an ever-flowing pipeline of homegrown talent. Top of the class this year are centre-back Goncalo Inacio, right-back Pedro Porro and winger Pedro Goncalves.

How defensively sound are Sporting?

The golden rule in Amorim's playbook is a solid, well-organised defence, so Sporting fans would have been worried to read pre-season press reports that the coach was concerned about his leaky rearguard. In summer friendlies, the back line of Inacio, Sebastian Coates and Matheus Reis looked anything but secure. Was it just a case of summer wrinkles, or something more serious?

Defensive prospect... Goncalo Inacio

COACH

Ruben Amorim
The 37-year-old is arguably the most influential boss in Portugal. Won the league cup with Braga in 2019-20, then guided Sporting to their first title since 2002 a year later.

KEY MAN

Marcus Edwards
The 23-year-old London-born winger joined from Vitoria Guimares in January.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH

Daniel Braganca
The diminutive 23-year-old will need to step up after Matheus Nunes joined Wolves.

CELTIC

The Bhoys are back in town

Back in the group stage for the first time since 2017-18, the Bhoys will be keen to do infinitely better than last time, when they lost five out of six ties and suffered heavy defeats to PSG. European respect is what they crave in Glasgow's East End and, backed by full houses at Celtic Park, the Hoops have the tools – especially their high-intensity pressing and flowing attacking football – to spring surprises.

How does Celtic's 4-3-3 operate?
In possession, the full-backs push inside to receive the ball centrally, creating an overload in the middle of the park, while tricky wingers Liel Abada and Jota stay high and wide to create one-on-ones.

Atmospheric...Celtic Park will come alive for the Champions League

COACH
Ange Postecoglou
Title winner in Australia and Japan before creating a vibrant winning machine at Celtic.

KEY MAN
Reo Hatate
Made an instant impact after joining from Kawasaki Frontale.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Jota
Brilliant winger signed permanently after excellent loan.

BENFICA

New coach, new approach

Benfica opted for a change of tack this summer when hiring their first foreign coach since 2009, with the hope that Roger Schmidt will bring a much-needed rethink at the Estadio Da Luz. The club have spent the income from Darwin Nunez's sale well, signing tricky winger David Neres and midfield schemer Enzo Fernandez from Shakhtar and River Plate.

What can we expect from Schmidt?
Schmidt shows no sign of moving away from his signature gung-ho approach. His two key changes so far have been to move Goncalo Ramos from second-striker to centre-forward, and shifting winger Rafa Silva into the No.10 role.

Safely through...Benfica fans celebrate during their play-off victory over Dynamo Kyiv

COACH
Roger Schmidt
The German has twice made the last 16 with Leverkusen.

KEY MAN
Enzo Fernandez
The classy Argentine marked his Benfica debut with a stunning volley v Midtjylland.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Petar Musa
Joined Benfica after a successful spell on loan at Boavista from Slavia Prague last season.

CLUB BRUGGE

Gambling on an inexperienced coach

In eight attempts, Brugge have never reached the Champions League last 16 and the smart money says they will fail again. The sale of Charles De Ketelaere has left a huge hole, while stopper Stanley Nsoki and striker Lois Openda have also left. The Belgian champions will be without Mats Rits too, after the midfielder tore cruciate knee ligaments.

How risky is Hoefkens' appointment?
While this is Hoefkens' first job, he knows the club inside out after excellent work in the academy. He has nurtured a host of talented youngsters and will hope to get the best out of the next generation of young stars, such as Cisse Sandra, Lynnt Audoor and Daniel Perez.

Big step up... Hoefkens has taken his first senior coaching role

COACH
Carl Hoefkens
Assistant to former boss Alfred Schreuder, who joined Ajax after winning the title.

KEY MAN
Noa Lang
Dribbler, finisher, creator. The Dutch international winger is the most exciting player in Belgium.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Bjorn Meijer
Promising Dutch left-back signed from Groningen for €6m.

The Outsiders

RANGERS

Rise from the ashes complete

After going into liquidation in 2012 and being forced to start anew in the Scottish fourth tier, Rangers' remarkable turnaround is now complete – with European success at the heart of their revival. Reaching the final of last season's Europa League was tangible evidence that the Gers were back, while returning to the Champions League for the first time in 12 years has underlined the point.

Does Alfredo Morelos have a future at Rangers after being dropped?
That Van Bronckhorst was prepared to send his best striker into exile tells its own story. It will be hard for the feisty Colombian striker to get back into his manager's good books; despite his excellent scoring record for Rangers (113 goals in 228 games), Morelos is a liability at times. With eight red cards, he holds the club's all-time sending-off record, and this season has looked totally out of shape. GVB is hoping for a positive reaction, but the dye may be cast.

Dramatic...Malik Tillman celebrates after scoring against PSV in the play-offs

COACH
Giovanni van Bronckhorst
A Champions League winner with Barcelona as a player, this will be the first campaign in the dugout at this level for the 47-year-old ex-Feyenoord boss.

KEY MAN
Ryan Kent
A rare example of a winger with real aggression – does the dirty work as well as the technical.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Malik Tillman
On loan from Bayern Munich, the 20-year-old midfielder offers an explosive mix of physicality and technique.

DINAMO ZAGREB

Stepping up from the Europa League

The last few months have been a fruitful period for Dinamo, first announcing a record turnover of €62.4m for 2021 – including a welcome profit of €838,000 – then qualifying for what will be their eighth seat at the European top table. The cash will be most welcome. Last season, Dinamo banked €14.6m for reaching the quarter-finals of the Europa League; a place in the Champions League group phase will bring in double that amount.

Will Dinamo's new recruits impress?
New centre-back Bosko Sutalo did not exactly cover himself in glory during a two-and-a-half-year spell in Italy with Atalanta and Verona, and Switzerland striker Josip Drmic has a lot of ground to recover after flopping badly at Norwich City. Yet Drmic has begun life in Zagreb with a flurry of goals, while the midfield has been strengthened by Austrian-Croat Robert Ljubicic, who arrives from Rapid Wien with a lot of potential.

Battling...Dinamo captain Arijan Ademi (L) scraps for the ball during the play-offs

COACH
Ante Cacic
Sacked by Croatia just before the 2018 World Cup. Returned for a second spell at Dinamo in April.

KEY MAN
Bruno Petkovic
The Croatia striker underlined his importance to Dinamo with a stunning bicycle kick in the play-off win over Bodo/Glimt.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Luka Ivanusec
The 22-year-old playmaker can be inconsistent, but has the skill to dribble through any defence.

VIKTORIA PLZEN

Hoping to punch above their weight

Reaching the group stage for the fourth time was highly satisfying for Viktoria, especially after last season's top scorer Jean-David Beauguel – who netted 21 goals in total – joined Saudi outfit Al-Wehda. Beauguel's departure left a hole in attack, but that has been filled by Tomas Chory and Czech international Jan Kliment, a new signing from Wisla Krakow.

Can Plzen improve on 2018-19?
The bar is set high. Plzen punched above their weight in 2018-19, beating Roma and finishing third with seven points. A well-organised, resilient outfit that can execute a gameplan, they will dream of upsetting the odds again.

Czech champions... Plzen line up for their play-off with Qarabag

COACH
Michal Bilek
Now in his second stint at Plzen after spells in Costa Rica, Georgia, Slovakia and Kazakhstan.

KEY MAN
Jindrich Stanek
Comfortably the finest goalkeeper in the Czech Republic.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Libor Holik
Solid Czech U21s right-back, on loan from Jablonec.

FC COPENHAGEN

Denmark's finest

Set to play in their fifth campaign, Copenhagen are Denmark's most experienced Champions League side, with their best performance coming in 2010-11 when they lost to Chelsea in the last 16. The Danish champions have strengthened this summer, signing Slovak stopper Denis Vavro (Lazio), Aussie keeper Mat Ryan (Real Sociedad) and midfielder Lukas Lerager (Genoa).

Where are Copenhagen vulnerable?
In the play-offs, FCK showed an alarming lack of ambition in beating Trabzonspor. Against stronger teams, these safety-first tactics could lead to the dam bursting, and they must offer more on the counter.

Through the play-offs... Copenhagen defeated Trabzonspor of Turkey

COACH
Jess Thorup
Controversially appointed in 2020, leaving Genk after a month. Two-time Danish champion.

KEY MAN
Viktor Claesson
Versatile frontrunner, capable of scoring from out wide or the middle.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Victor Kristiansen
Composed yet gutsy Danish U21 left-back. A revelation last season.

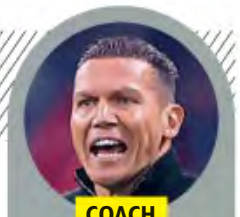
MACCABI HAIFA

Back after a 13-year absence

For the first time since 2009, Maccabi are through to the group phase. And how thoroughly they deserved it, seeing off Olympiakos, Apollon Limassol and Red Star Belgrade in qualifying. Haifa are now the only Israeli team to reach the Champions League three times, and will want to avoid the humiliation of their last appearance, in 2009-10, when they lost all six games without scoring a goal.

How has Bakhar improved Maccabi?
Mentally. Maccabi have an unbreakable fighting spirit in the ranks, a rare refusal to accept defeat. In both legs against Red Star, they came from behind to force a result. Aggression, work ethic and humility are drilled into the squad.

The wait is over...Maccabi players celebrate returning to the Champions League



COACH
Barak Bakhar
The 42-year-old has won five Israeli titles in seven years: three with Be'er Seva and two with Haifa.

KEY MAN
Frantzdy Pierrot
The physically imposing Haitian striker scored five goals in qualifying.

YOUNGSTER TO WATCH
Ofri Arad
The 23-year-old Israel defender joined Maccabi at the age of ten.

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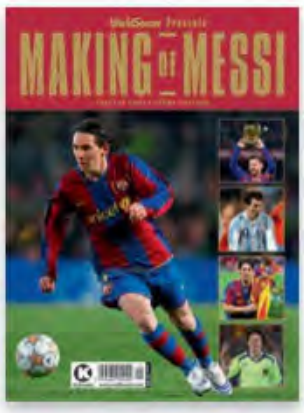

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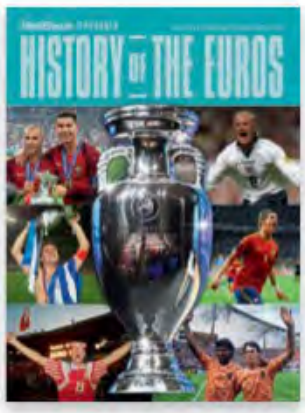

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REVIEW

Lionesses bring football home

Glenn Moore reports on England women lifting their first major trophy in front of a jubilant Wembley crowd in record-breaking tournament

The true impact of the 2022 Women's Euros will not be known for some years, and the arguments over "legacy" had begun even before England's victorious women had shaken off their hangovers, but in the moment it was a resounding, record-breaking triumph that even the most optimistic could have barely hoped for.

In stadia the tournament smashed records day after day. The opening match, England's nervy 1-0 defeat of Austria at Old Trafford, drew a competition record 68,871. That was broken for the final with 87,192 at Wembley to see England beat Germany 2-1 after extra-time.

That was the biggest European Championship attendance of either gender, eclipsing the 79,115 who filled the Bernabeu for the 1964 men's final. Back then few women in Europe were even allowed to play football.

By the end, the tournament had also set record attendances for group, quarter-final and semi-final matches – with and without host participation – and delivered seven of the top ten all-time Women's Euro audiences. In total 574,875 attended, more than double the record set in 2017, with an average gate of 18,544.

Iconic...Chloe Kelly celebrates after scoring England's winner in the final

And unlike the men's Euros the previous year, which ended in disgraceful scenes at Wembley, there were no arrests or reports of trouble. Throughout, fans of different nations mixed happily in grounds.

On television the tournament passed the cumulative Europe-wide figure of 164m viewers, set in 2017, before the semi-finals. The final drew the UK's biggest TV audience of the year, peaking at 23.3 million on various BBC platforms (plus pub and similar settings, which are not counted). In Germany 17.9m watched on television, twice the figure for the same final match-up (won 6-2 by Germany) in 2009.

Those were the raw figures. As significant was the emotional impact. England's players increasingly rode a tidal wave of popular support on their path to glory, dominating the print and broadcast media. A Wembley friendly with World Cup holders USA was announced two days after the final, and sold out all 80,000 tickets in less than 24 hours.

An England team winning on terrestrial television is always going to draw an audience, but as well as the scale it was the composition of that audience that was different.

The Football Association had initially marketed the Women's Super League for mothers and daughters, using brands like Disney and girl band Little Mix. Looking at the stands they realised the fans were as likely to be fathers and sons – people who already liked football and enjoyed the product – and adjusted accordingly. Maybe that new, female fanbase wasn't there after all.

With England's success that elusive mass female audience suddenly appeared. It seemed what had been missing was awareness – and success.

Unlike the men's Euros the previous year, which ended in disgraceful scenes at Wembley, there were no arrests or reports of trouble. Throughout, fans of different nations mixed happily in grounds

Around the country there was a sense of empowerment for women and girls. A woman playing football is a role model, but only up to a point. A woman playing football in front of tens of thousands, and millions more on television, and doing so successfully, with a bit of character, a lot of belief, and a sense of belonging, is a much bigger role model.

Aiding this was the humility of the

Record-breaking...the attendance at the final inside Wembley Stadium

players, which the media were happy to go along with. How long that lasts as the women's game draws in wealth remains to be seen. At the moment the sight of skipper Leah Williamson wearing a £1,450 pair of Dior shorts as the team celebrated with a night out is seen positively as "chic" and "glamorous".

INSPIRATIONAL LIONESSES

They are, however, a down-to-earth group with many inspiring stories. Bayern Munich-bound midfielder Georgia Stanway did her homework in the back of the car as her parents drove her from Cumbria to Blackburn for training after school. Beth Mead continued to pull pints in her local pub even after turning pro, as a thank-you for sponsoring her when younger. Jill Scott, who helped manage the closing stages of several key ties, is a throwback to the amateur days and used to drive across northern England in an old banger from Liverpool to Sunderland to coach while playing for Everton. Shortly after lifting the trophy, the midfielder was back in the coffee shop that she owns in Manchester, making drinks and posing for photos with fans.

Major hurdles have been overcome too. Chloe Kelly, whose shirt-twirling celebration after scoring the winner in the final went viral, only returned to playing in April after suffering a severe knee injury. It took reserves of character for Fran Kirby to overcome depression after her mother's early death, and subsequent illness and injury. And there are so many other inspiring backstories.

This long grind to success was surely a factor in the team's resilience, one of their main strengths. Against Austria they needed to conquer opening-night nerves. In the quarter-final against technical, ball-rotating Spain they were outplayed for long periods and behind, but dragged themselves back by sheer will before maintaining their composure when Spain lost theirs.

In the semi-final Sweden could have been two goals ahead, raiding on the break, but goalkeeper Mary Earps kept them at bay and England, having closed the gaps, eventually romped home. And in the final they held firm when Germany – whose footballing strengths in many ways mirrored England – were on top, and took their chances when they came.

They also had luck, as all successful teams do. Sarina Wiegman was able to name the same starting XI for all six matches, believed to be unique in a major tournament. Several players – and the coach herself – contracted COVID-19, but unlike with Sweden and Germany – who lost Klara Buhl – they were not starters.

> England were also the best team. They won all seven games, scoring 22 goals and conceding two

Sweden and Germany both rattled their woodwork, they had the benefit of a tight penalty call at 0-0 versus Norway, a marginal decision on Ella Toone's goal against Spain, and survived a strong VAR handball shout against Williamson with the final goalless. All of those decisions were on balance correct, but at other times they may have gone against them.

But England were also the best team. They won all seven games, scoring 22 goals and conceding two. Built around the triumvirate of Williamson and Millie Bright in central defence and holding/passing midfielder Keira Walsh ahead of them, they had attacking options galore. In the end it was the sheer variety of those that made the difference; England were hard to stop.

They scored toe-pokes and long-range drives, from open play and set-pieces, via cut-backs and through balls. They could attack down the flanks or through the middle, by going long or passing short.

The quality of the goals was also exceptional. Five made UEFA's top ten of the tournament, and it could have been more.

Alessia Russo's backheel against Sweden was the highlight but she also scored a lovely one against Northern Ireland. Toone's scooped chip in the final, Mead's slalom against Norway

Raucous... fans gather to celebrate at London's Trafalgar Square the day after the final

Champions... Leah Williamson lifts the trophy

and on-the-turn volley v Sweden, Kirby's goals against Sweden and Northern Ireland, and Stanway's rocket effort against Spain were also notable.

England had a depth only Germany could match. Russo scored four goals off the bench, Toone two key ones. Alex Greenwood, Scott and Kelly also made crucial substitute appearances. It must have been hard for the players who did not get a kick, but if they were unhappy they did not show it.

The day-after celebrations at Trafalgar Square were a raucous, joyous occasion and the Lionesses seized their moment by demanding the two candidates to take over the leadership of the ruling Conservative Party – and thus become the UK's Prime Minister – pledge to increase provision for girls to play football at school and have a minimum two hours physical education a week.

To varying extents other participant nations had impacts back home, though obviously success helps in terms of generating viewers and enthusiasm.

But even in those countries for whom the tournament was an afterthought players, supporters, activists and officials who made it to England should be inspired by what they experienced to try to replicate elements in their own countries. It showed what could be possible.

HOSTS WITH THE MOST

Given the hosting triumph it is a shame the FA have decided against pursuing a bid to stage the 2027 or 2031 Women's World Cups for fear of jeopardising the joint UK-and-Ireland bid for the 2028 men's Euros.

Not that the tournament's success was foreseen by many. UEFA and the FA had to plead with cities and clubs to offer up their grounds and facilities. A lack of response meant the venues were an odd mix with none in the northeast, a football hotbed from where several of the England team hailed, including star forward Mead.

A tournament that began at Old Trafford and ended at Wembley also took in Leigh, Rotherham and Milton Keynes.

Leigh, where Manchester United women play, proved a very welcoming host, but it wasn't a very big one with well-known transport accessibility issues. Manchester City's academy ground, where their women's team play, had good links but, with the terraces ends closed, had a capacity below 5,000. Rotherham proved a decent venue, if a bit close to Sheffield United's Bramall Lane geographically, as did Milton Keynes, though it was a controversial choice given the circumstances around the home club's formation.

Brighton, Southampton, Brentford and Sheffield United all served the tournament well with Bramall Lane and the Amex especially conjuring superb atmospheres for their England matches.

Mastermind... England boss Sarina Wiegman

Sheffield United's Bramall Lane had the benefit of hosting Netherlands and Sweden whose fans travelled in colourful, noisy numbers. There were lots of German flags in evidence too, but every team had a degree of support with Portugal being watched at Leigh by a trio of Manchester City-based compatriots Joao Cancelo, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.

> "The bar is very high and it's tough for the next host – to match these numbers will not be easy"
>
> UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin

A GROWTH IN DEPTH

Portugal eventually ran out of steam, losing their last match 5-0 to Sweden, but they worried the Dutch and, despite conceding twice in the opening five minutes, were unlucky not to beat Switzerland.

For a team only called up late on it was a creditable display that underlined the growing depth of the game. There was an 8-0, but that was a freak result, England's slaughter of Norway stunning both sides and everyone else. It summed up a dire tournament for Norway who had been buoyed by the return of Ada Hegerberg but went home early and chastened.

The other "dark horse" was also an unhappy surprise of the group stage. Italy arrived full of optimism, boosted by the good performance of Juventus in the Champions League and the imminent professionalisation of the domestic league.

Had Barbara Bonansea converted an early chance in their opening game against France things may have been different, but the way the defence subsequently fell apart suggests not. They took one point from their remaining matches with Iceland and Belgium leaving a squad heavily reliant on a pool of 30-somethings much to ponder. Can they hang on for a year for the World Cup, or is it time to rebuild?

There will be a few coaches pondering this, and players wondering whether to quit now, or wait another year. It is a particular issue for Sweden who must fear they peaked at the Tokyo Olympics, which they should have won. By the time of the World Cup more than half of their Euros squad will be over 30.

But most teams have reason to be cheerful. Belgium and Austria did better than anticipated. France finally won a knockout match, their first in a decade, though opinions remain divided on

Epic...Germany's Alexandra Popp celebrates scoring against France in the semi-final

Atmospheric...Brighton's Amex stadium hosted two England matches

whether they would have gone further without Corinne Diacre as coach. Suffice to say her contract extension with *Les Bleues* raised eyebrows.

Spain missed Alexia Putellas, as any team would, but Aitana Bonmati and Mariona Caldentey flourished out of her shadow, and they pushed England hard. They are getting closer.

So are Germany, who came into this tournament short of form and missing key players, especially in midfield. Yet they deservedly reached the final and might have won it if Alexandra Popp and Buhl not been ruled out. They have a lot of excellent young players, notably Buhl, Lena Oberdorf (the Young Player of the Tournament) and Giulia Gwinn, and are back among the first rank.

By contrast the dethroned holders, the Netherlands, are in a real state of flux. They only lost 1-0 to France in the quarter-finals but would have been well beaten but for goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar, one of the Euros' breakout stars. At one stage it even looked as if the Swiss would knock them out in the group stage.

The overhauling and rebuilding of the team Wiegman took to European glory in 2017 will now need to be undertaken by a new manager after Mark Parsons stepped down just ten days after the tournament ended. "There is too little confidence that the ambitions will be realised under the current leadership," read a statement from the Dutch FA.

WESTERN DOMINANCE

More broadly there are other issues to be faced. The first Euros – the European Competition for Women's Football as it was known – in 1984, only featured four teams playing two-legged semi-finals and a final, but 16 nations entered qualifying, the same as featured in the finals this year.

Of that 16 only two – Scotland and the Republic of Ireland – were not in England this summer. Replacing them were Austria and Spain. Which meant both then and now there was no representation from what used to be called the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe.

Admittedly Russia did qualify, but were replaced by Portugal after being expelled due to the invasion of Ukraine, but nevertheless it does underline that women's football, like men's, is dominated by Western European teams, and this also applies at club level.

Of the former Iron Curtain nations, the Czechs are most likely to break through but football's financial landscape suggests it is going to be harder as the women's game gains more funding from western clubs, FAs and economies, however much UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin would like to level the European playing field.

Impressive...Aitana Bonmati shone in Spain's midfield

And as elsewhere in football, money talks. England and Germany are the two best-funded women's teams in Europe. Frustrated by years of failure the FA went out and bought the best, Wiegman, and backed her with a large supporting cast of coaches, medics and others.

They can now argue the investment has paid off handsomely with sponsors queuing up and fans rushing to buy tickets. Another reward is a place in the first UEFA-CONMEBOL Women's Finalissima, following on from the men's match between Argentina and Italy earlier this year.

England will play Copa America Feminina champions Brazil. The date and venue are to be decided but it is likely to be in Europe early in 2023.

Before then a decision must be made on the hosts for the 2025 Women's Euros. There are four likely bids: Poland, France, a joint Swiss-Liechtenstein entry, and a combined Scandinavian one featuring Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Whoever wins it will find it tough to match this year's edition, admitted Ceferin. "The bar is very high and it's tough for the next host – to match these numbers will not be easy."

WS Team of the tournament

Coach: Sarina Wiegman *(England)*
Substitutes: Daphne van Domselaar *(Netherlands)*, Giulia Gwinn *(Germany)*, Millie Bright *(England)*, Aitana Bonmati *(Spain)*, Ella Toone *(England)*, Alessia Russo *(England)*, Mariona Caldentey *(Spain)*

Kelly makes history

QUARTER-FINALS

All four quarter-finals were won by the favourites but, in a further underlining of the sport's growing depth, each had to work hard to progress. England and France required extra-time, Sweden's winner came in injury-time, and Germany could not relax until a 90th-minute second.

England went first, coming from behind against a technically superior Spanish side almost through sheer will. Spain's goal, neatly tucked in by Esther Gonzalez after smart work from her Real Madrid team-mate Athenea del Castillo, followed 54 minutes in which England were often chasing shadows.

But bolstered by astute substitutions and a raucous 28,994 crowd at Brighton, England dragged themselves level when Ella Toone turned in a knockdown by fellow substitute Alessia Russo with just six minutes to play in normal time. As Spain lost their heads, Stanway drove through midfield before lashing home a rapturously celebrated winner.

Germany were next, taking advantage of kicking errors by keeper Manuela Zinsberger to beat Austria 2-0 in front of 16,025 at Brentford. But Austria hit the woodwork three times and pushed their neighbours hard.

Belgium were less bold against Sweden at Leigh, in part by design, in part due to Swedish supremacy. A bravura display from Nicky Evrard, who combines part-time goalkeeping with a bouncy castle business, kept the Swedes at bay. But as extra-time loomed Linda Sembrant scrambled in a loose ball at a corner to puncture her resistance.

At Rotherham, France dominated a Dutch team that continued to look out of sorts. Vivianne Miedema was back after a bout of COVID but Lieke Martens, the Player of the Tournament in 2019, had followed keeper Sari van Veenendaal in being ruled out of the tournament and Jill Roord was omitted from the starting line-up after criticising coach Mark Parsons in an interview.

France had lost star striker Marie-Antoinette Katoto to the ACL curse, but Melvine Malard proved an able deputy. The Dutch were again indebted to Van Domselaar, who made 11 saves, aided by defender Stefanie van der Gragt who made goal-line clearances from Malard and Grace Geyoro.

It took a VAR-awarded penalty in the 102nd-minute to beat the keeper, awarded after Dominique Janssen brought down Kadidiatou Diani. Even then Van Domselaar nearly saved Eve Perisset's well-hit spot-kick.

Quarter-final... Belgium goalkeeper Nicky Evrard punches the ball during the clash with Sweden

SEMI-FINALS

On an astonishing night at an ecstatic, disbelieving Bramall Lane, England romped into the final, thrashing

Winning goal...Chloe Kelly pokes home England's winner at Wembley

Critical...Jill Roord was dropped from the Netherlands starting XI

much-fancied Sweden 4-0.

The Olympic silver medallists should have taken an early lead, regularly opening England up, but a combination of poor finishing, the crossbar and Mary Earps' goalkeeping kept the scores level.

Then Mead swivelled to volley in a 34th-minute Lucy Bronze cross and, again, England relaxed and flourished. After the break Bronze headed in from a corner and, after Lauren Hemp hit the bar, Russo settled the tie with an audacious backheel destined to be replayed for years, nutmegging Hedvig Lindahl. Finally, with a chipped finished, Fran Kirby added gloss to what was only England's fourth victory over Sweden in 29 attempts.

The second semi-final was also won by the team that had two days extra rest, which may not have been coincidental.

Certainly Corinne Diacre, coach of beaten France, referenced it, though her critics would suggest leaving behind Amandine Henry – captain of European champions Lyon and Player of the Match in the Champions League final – was just as big a factor in yet another Gallic knockout-round exit.

But there was also the loss to injury of Katoto and the excellence of German keeper Merle Frohms. Most of all there was the ruthless finishing of Alexandra Popp, having the time of her life at her first European Championship, one that she began on the bench.

She was grateful just for that after missing the 2013 and 2017 editions through injury, and only returning from another operation in April, then catching COVID in June.

So she watched from the bench as Bayern Munich's Lea Schuller scored her 26th goal in her 40th cap against Denmark in the first match, then came on and scored herself. Then it was Schuller's turn to contract COVID. Popp started against Spain and scored again. Before receiving the Player of the Match award, she donned Schuller's No.7 shirt, wearing it back-to-front to face the cameras in tribute to her.

Joint-top scorer... Alexandra Popp, like Beth Mead, scored six goals

It was a nice touch, but Schuller must have had mixed feelings as she watched Popp start and score yet again against Finland, then Austria, and finally France in the semis, twice.

> **The goal celebration was instantly iconic...Kelly pulled her England shirt off and whirled it around her head**

Those goals sandwiched a rather unfortunate own goal by keeper Frohms – Diani's shot rebounding off the post and in off her backside. The keeper subsequently made a trio of saves before Popp headed the winner.

FINAL

The final was a scrappy game settled by a scrappy goal, but the goal celebration was instantly iconic and the occasion unforgettable.

Chloe Kelly's two-yard toe-poke, after an air-shot, was by some distance the worst goal in England's 2-1 defeat of Germany but that mattered not.

Audacious...Alessia Russo scores against Sweden in the semis

The 24-year-old Londoner sprinted away – looking around briefly to ensure the goal stood – pulled her England shirt off and whirled it around her head before leaping into the arms of team-mates on the sidelines.

The majority of the 87,192 packed into Wembley went delirious with joy. Across the Atlantic Brandi Chastain, whose 1999 World Cup-winning celebration Kelly had unconsciously evoked, tweeted her approval.

There were still ten minutes left but England shut the game down until the final whistle sparked scenes of pandemonium across the country.

Kateryna Monzul's whistle had been busy. The Ukrainian referee booked seven players in a tetchy match between two well-balanced teams.

Germany began slowly, rocked by Popp's withdrawal shortly before kick-off with an injury suffered practising penalties the previous night. Schuller, once the headline act, proved a poor understudy.

Clear chances were elusive in the first half, but during a goalmouth scramble a loose ball appeared to strike Leah Williamson's arm. Germany demanded a penalty but a VAR check turned them down. Coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg would later condemn the decision.

Instead England took the lead, substitute Ella Toone running onto a superb Keira Walsh pass to sublimely lift the ball over the goalkeeper to score.

Lina Magull drove Germany back into it. Having been denied by the bar she fizzed a second opportunity inside the near post to level with 11 minutes left.

"Here we go again'" thought weary England supporters – both in attendance and at home. But Kelly had other ideas, winning England their first major trophy since Alf Ramsey's men 56 years earlier.

REVIEW

Group by group

GROUP A

Norway arrived in England as many people's dark horses, with Ada Hegerberg's return after a five-year exile boosting an attack that already boasted Barcelona's Caroline Graham Hansen and Chelsea's Guro Reiten. A 4-1 opening dispatch of Northern Ireland with the latter pair scoring seemed to confirm that status.

Eight days later, the two-time European Championship winners left in ignominy, thrashed 8-0 by England – their record defeat – then knocked out with a sorry showing in a 1-0 loss to Austria courtesy of a header by Hoffenheim's Nicole Billa. Hegerberg finished goalless. Coach Martin Sjogren was swiftly pushed into resigning.

England had begun with a nervy 1-0 victory over Austria in front of a sold-out crowd just shy of 70,000 at Old Trafford, Beth Mead scoring the crucial goal. The early stages against Norway were also cagey but then Manchester City's Ellen White won a spot-kick, converted by Georgia Stanway, and the hosts were up and running.

By half-time it was 6-0, with Norway shell-shocked – centre-back Maria Thorisdottir having a particularly torrid night – and most of the 28,847 at Brighton in dreamland. Mead went on to score a hat-trick, White a brace.

Austria, well-coached and disciplined, beat Northern Ireland 2-0 to set up a qualification decider with Norway. The 1-0 win showed that the Austrians' semi-final place in 2017 was no fluke and condemned Norway to a second consecutive Euros group stage exit.

Northern Ireland finished with a 5-0 loss to England but merely participating at the Euros had sparked a surge of interest that will hopefully have an impact further down the line.

Disappointing... Returning Norway forward Ada Hegerberg

GROUP B

"We knew this was the group of death. Unfortunately we were the ones who died. But we fought for our lives."

So said Denmark head coach Lars Sondergaard after the 2017 runners-up went out at the group stage, finishing behind Germany and Spain, fifth and seventh in the world respectively.

The Danes were up against it from the start, losing 4-0 to a German side whose confidence belied a troubled build-up with inconsistent performances and player absences.

A narrow 1-0 win over Finland revived Danish chances (Pernille Harder with the winner) and with Spain having lost 2-0 to Germany – a defensive masterclass from the eight-time winners – the pair went into a decider at Brentford.

Denmark needed to win, but Sondergaard knew it would be suicidal to attack and leave themselves wide open against Spain, so formulated a game plan of keeping it tight for 70 minutes, then going on the offensive.

Group of death... Denmark's Janni Thomsen competes with Spanish forward Athenea del Castillo

Had Spain goalkeeper Sandra Panos – redeeming herself after a howler against Germany – not denied substitute Nadia Nadim the heist could have worked. But in the event it was Marta Cardona who scored, notching a Spanish winner in the final minute.

Nevertheless, Sondergaard thought that his team had grown during the tournament, and will look forward to the 2023 World Cup for which Denmark have already qualified.

Finland's Anna Signeul, in contrast, was fired after her team's trio of anticipated defeats as attention turned to a faltering World Cup qualification campaign.

Finland had scored the group's opening goal, veteran Linda Sallstrom striking in the opening minute against Spain. But they then conceded eight without reply in the rest of their campaign, losing 4-1 to Spain, 1-0 to Denmark and 3-0 to Germany.

GROUP C

It always looked likely that Sweden and Netherlands, second and fourth in the world, would qualify. And they did, by a six-point margin, but this was nowhere near as easy as the table suggests.

An opening draw between the pair, Jill Roord cancelling out Jonna Andersson's first-half goal soon after the break, appeared to set both up for easy qualification, especially as Portugal had earlier come back to hold Switzerland.

The Portuguese, late call-ups after Russia were expelled in May following the invasion of Ukraine, appeared to be out of their depth when they went two down after five minutes. But after the break the game was transformed and they were unlucky not to win with substitute Telma Encarnacao hitting the post late on.

Francisco Neto's team proved just as resilient against the Dutch, coming back from 2-0 down yet again, before Danielle van de Donk's curling 20-yard thunderbolt ended their resistance.

Dramatic winner... Netherlands' Danielle van de Donk watches her wonderstrike go in

> "We knew this was the group of death. Unfortunately we were the ones who died"
>
> **Denmark coach Lars Sondergaard**

On the same day, it took a similar strike from Sweden's Hanna Bennison, 11 minutes from time, to put away the Swiss in Sheffield. Ramona Bachman had earlier cancelled out Fridolina Rolfo's opener within two minutes.

Portugal's defiance finally ran out in the third game, when they went down 5-0 to Sweden. But Switzerland put Netherlands under the pump, drawing 1-1 until the final ten minutes, before ultimately collapsing and going on to lose 4-1.

Were it not for rookie goalkeeper Daphne van Domselaar, who took the gloves from captain Sari van Veenedaal who was injured in the opening game, Switzerland may well have gained the win they needed.

GROUP D

France won the group, as expected, but behind them nothing happened as predicted. Italy, another supposed dark horse, turned out to be a nag not a thoroughbred, while Iceland went home unbeaten, and Belgium surprised everyone – themselves included – to qualify as runners-up.

The Red Flames began slowly, their 1-1 draw with Iceland overshadowed by France's 5-1 evisceration of an Italian side that disproved the national reputation for good defence.

After Barbara Bonansea missed a fine chance, Italy were torn apart on the flanks, going into the break 5-0 down. Grace Geyoro grabbed a hat-trick and Marie-Antoinette Katoto and Delphine Cascarino a goal apiece before Martina Piemonte's consolation goal.

France went on to beat Belgium before being held by a 112th-minute Icelandic equaliser long after it mattered. Italy, meanwhile, drew with Iceland then succumbed 1-0 to Belgium.

It was a "historic moment for Belgium football," said their coach Ives Serneels.

Italy's Milena Bertolini said: "I think there were too many expectations. People at home almost thought this team should win the Euros. That weighed heavily on their shoulders.

"We're a mid-range team, not a top-class team, [but] it will definitely make us stronger for the future."

This was the worst-attended group with every match drawing sub-10,000 gates. Iceland skipper Sara Bjork Gunnarsdottir had said using Manchester City's Academy stadium – with a capacity of just 4,700 due to UEFA's refusal to use standing areas – was "embarrassing" and "disrespectful." But none of the three matches there were sold out, and even with their prime minister and president attending, Iceland only attracted 7,888 across two games.

Upset...Italy's Agnese Bonfantini watches on as Belgium celebrate reaching the last eight

SUPER SARINA

In less than a year, Sarina Wiegman has turned England women from serial underperformers into ruthless European champions

Words: Asif Burhan

Heading back to Wembley Park tube station hours after England had won their first senior international trophy in 56 years, a group of female fans were still serenading the woman who they believed was responsible for the Lionesses' victory in UEFA Women's Euro 2022. "Sarina, you're the one, you still turn me on, football's coming home again!" – sung to the tune of Atomic Kitten's iconic hit *Whole Again*.

Even before becoming the first permanent foreign coach to lead the England women's team last October, the international coaching credentials of the 52-year-old Sarina Petronella Wiegman-Glotzbach were formidable. In five years in charge of the Netherlands national women's team, she won 12 straight matches at major tournament finals, a sequence that was only ended by USA in the 2019 World Cup final, two years after sweeping to the Women's Euros title on home soil. At last year's Tokyo Olympics, only a penalty shootout loss prevented Wiegman from taking the Dutch further than the quarter-finals.

By then, she had already agreed to assume the vacant position in charge of the Lionesses, a team that had never previously won an international trophy. In ten months, she has won 18 of her 20 matches, with the team scoring a phenomenal 106 goals, including a record-breaking 22 at this summer's Women's Euro finals. There, England won every match to extend Wiegman's personal 100 per cent record in the competition to 12 successive wins. In leading two countries to successive titles in the competition, Wiegman has become the first coach in either the men's or women's game to win the European Championship with different nations; doing so in back-to-back tournaments will be a particularly difficult record to break.

After winning the Euros in 2017, the Dutch women's first major title, Wiegman would have been forgiven for resting on her laurels. With a squad young and talented enough to be competitive on the international front for years to come, her position was secure. Yet feeling that no coach could hold the same role for the rest of their lives, Wiegman decided she wanted to see if she could succeed in a different culture.

With the financial growth of the English women's domestic league outstripping their European rivals, Wiegman believed the England job was "one step ahead" of her role with the Netherlands. After a tentative approach from the FA, a conversation with Baroness Sue Campbell – the

ENGLAND 2022

head of women's football in England – "triggered" Wiegman into uprooting her life in the Netherlands to deal with the pressures of leading another host nation into a Women's Euros.

With victory over Germany, Wiegman became the third female international coach to win a continental title this summer, the day after Pia Sundhage had led Brazil to the Copa America Femenina and a week after Desiree Ellis had led South Africa to the Africa Women's Cup of Nations title. In fact, female coaches have won the last seven Women's Euro titles, the last four Olympic titles and four of the last five Women's World Cups.

Vicky Huyton of the Female Coaching Network believes this success is down to the greater barriers women coaches have to overcome to reach the top of the game. "As a female coach in performance sport, you can't be mediocre. There are so few opportunities – the pathway to becoming an elite coach is not the same as the pathway for male coaches. If you're a woman that has reached the level that Sarina has, you absolutely can only be the best of the best."

This success has not yet been replicated in the European women's club game where Lyon's Sonia Bompastor last season became the first female coach to lead a team to victory in the Women's Champions League in 13 years. She was also the only female coach to make the knockout stages. Huyton believes that unlike the men's game, this is due to the women's game being led by international football. "Women's football historically has always focused on the success of the national team so the development of women's national teams is possibly further ahead than the domestic leagues."

Euros winner... Wiegman lifts the Euros trophy in 2017

> Wiegman made it clear which players were in her first team and who would be expected to make an impact off the bench. "When your role is clear, it creates certainty," she declared

Speaking in 2018, Wiegman said: "I do think it's an advantage for me as a coach that I've grown up in women's soccer. I was a soccer player myself so I know the world very well. I know the way we have developed the game, the way the players have developed themselves and which steps they have taken. So, for me, that helps. I know what they feel."

As a player Wiegman played with some of the greats of the game – including Kristine Lilly and Mia Hamm – after joining North Carolina Tar Heels in 1989. Anson Dorrance, who would go on to lead the United States to victory in the first-ever Women's World Cup in 1991, was the club's manager at the time, and he recalls of Wiegman: "She was a wonderful technical player, a wonderful tactical player and she played during a great era. She was basically a playmaking midfielder."

In contrast to the amateur environment in the Netherlands at the time, Wiegman's one year in the United States opened her eyes to professional working conditions which she described as being "of the highest level". Wiegman returned home to work as a physical education teacher alongside winning 99 international caps before retiring in 2003 to have her second child.

A Dutch champion in her first two coaching roles with Ter Leede and ADO Den Haag, Wiegman was appointed assistant coach of the women's national team in 2014. She became only the

Unveiling...Wiegman is announced England manager at Wembley

third woman in history to complete the KNVB coaching licence before obtaining her UEFA Pro licence in 2016 while serving an internship with Sparta Rotterdam's men's team. There she would become the first-ever woman to work at a professional men's club, serving as assistant coach, vowing in a subsequent interview with the KNVB to instil the same level of professionalism into the women's game.

Wiegman exhibited a certain degree of ruthlessness ahead of this summer's tournament, cutting long-time captain Steph Houghton from her final squad. At the finals, she made it clear which players were in her first team and who would be expected to make an impact off the bench. "When your role is clear, it creates certainty," she declared and, true to her word, proceeded to pick the same starting XI in all six matches (it was a similar story in 2017, when nine of her Dutch players in 2017 started every game). The substitutes played their part too, contributing seven goals throughout the tournament, including both goals in the final.

Yet, Wiegman's assertiveness did not come without flexibility. Ahead of the final, Georgia Stanway revealed to the media that Wiegman had made it clear to her earlier in the season that she was not first choice, urging her to keep going and push the other players.

Key player...Georgia Stanway and Wiegman during England training

When new captain Leah Williamson was moved into defence, Stanway was brought back in and was instrumental in the team's ultimate success, scoring the coruscating extra-time winner against Spain.

After leading the Dutch to success five years ago, the KNVB commissioned a statue of Wiegman, the first of a woman, at their national training centre at Zeist. Now, after leading England to their first international title since 1966, there are calls for another sculpture of her to stand alongside the only other manager to win a title for England, Sir Alf Ramsey, in the Wembley Stadium tunnel.

The next test for the new European champions is a glamorous friendly at Wembley this October against Wiegman's only international nemesis, the United States. The reigning world champions have inflicted Wiegman's only defeats at a major tournament, overcoming her Netherlands side 2-0 in the 2019 Women's World Cup final, and winning by the same scoreline in an international friendly in November 2020, before eliminating the Dutch from the Tokyo Olympics on penalties.

The game became the fastest-selling women's football match in history, with all 80,000 tickets snapped up in under 24 hours. Wiegman became accustomed to an increase in expectations from the Dutch media after winning the European Championship in 2017. Should her Lionesses end the year by defeating the world champions, the English public will expect no less from her than to bring home a first Women's World Cup from Australia and New Zealand in 2023.

TRAILBLAZERS

The world's most influential female football coaches

PIA SUNDHAGE

The 62-year-old Swedish coach has led teams to three consecutive Olympic finals, winning gold in 2008 and 2012 with the United States, followed by silver with her home country in 2016. Now coaching an international team on a third different continent, winning the Copa America Femenina with Brazil earlier this summer.

BEV PRIESTMAN

Former England assistant coach under Phil Neville, Priestman took up the Canadian national team job in 2020. By winning in Tokyo last summer, she became the first English coach to win Olympic gold since George Raynor in 1948, defeating arch-rivals the United States in the semi-final.

DESIREE ELLIS

Coach of South Africa since 2016, she took them to their first-ever Women's World Cup finals in 2019 before winning her country's first African Women's Cup of Nations title in July. By defeating hosts Morocco 2-1 in the final in front of 51,000 supporters in Rabat, she ended the team's record of reaching five previous finals without lifting the trophy.

JILL ELLIS

An Olympic gold medallist as assistant coach to Pia Sundhage in 2008, Ellis took up the United States head coach position in 2014. In 2019 the English-born coach became the first woman to win back-to-back World Cup trophies, a feat not achieved since before the war by Italian men's coach Vittorio Pozzo, who won consecutive World Cups in 1934 and 1938.

Victorious...Wiegman kisses her Euro 2022 winners' medal

Glenn Moore

A summer of football

England wasn't the only country to host a continental women's tournament this summer

Winners...USA players celebrate during their victory over rivals Canada

The Euros may have been the headline act, but it was only one part of a global fiesta of women's football in mid-2022 with Africa, CONCACAF, South America and Oceania also staging international tournaments.

When the last final whistles blew, USA, Brazil, South Africa and Papua New Guinea had joined England and China – who won the Asian Cup earlier this year – as regional champions.

AFRICA

In their sixth final, South Africa finally won the Women's Africa Cup of Nations, defeating hosts Morocco in front of a continental record crowd of 51,000. Both teams had beaten perennial winners Nigeria on the way.

Expanded from eight to 12 teams, the 14th WAFCON returned with vigour after a two-year COVID-enforced delay. A controversial regional qualifying process meant there was representation in most corners of the continent, only the northeast missing out.

Morocco won Group A with Ghizlane Chebbak, Player of the Tournament, scoring in all three matches. Senegal went through in second with Uganda and debutants Burkina Faso picking up a point against each other.

Togo, another newcomer, picked up a creditable point against Cameroon in Group B, but failed to progress. Zambia, despite being unable to field Olympic goalscoring sensation Barbra Banda after she was one of four players reported to have been affected by gender eligibility tests, won a tight group ahead of Cameroon and Tunisia.

Group C had two heavyweights and two newbies. South Africa won the contest between the former two, gaining a 2-1 upset against Nigeria during which the latter's Ashiat Oshoala, of Barcelona, was ruled out of the tournament. A few hours later Botswana beat Burundi 4-2, which effectively booked a quarter-final place behind the big two.

There they succumbed to a Morocco side coached by former Lyon women's manager Reynald Pedros and growing in confidence. Nigeria and South Africa edged 1-0 wins against Cameroon and Tunisia respectively, and Zambia beat Senegal in a penalty shootout.

The reward for all four was a place in the 2023 World Cup – a debut for both Morocco and Zambia. The losers went into a repechage from which Senegal, via another shootout, and Cameroon won a place in the inter-confederation play-offs.

In the first semi-final South Africa, who had lost Thembi Kgatlana, newly recruited to Racing Louisville from Atletico Madrid, to a ruptured Achilles tendon, beat Zambia with Linda Motlhalo converting a harshly-awarded 94th-minute penalty.

But all eyes were on the second tie, in Rabat. In front of 45,000 passionate, nervous fans, Nigeria, winners of 11 of the 13 WAFCONs, were knocked out by Morocco in a penalty shootout, despite almost pinching victory with nine women.

Second-half red cards for Halimatu Ayinde and Rasheedat Ajibade reduced the holders to nine by the 71st minute.

Champions at last... South Africa lift the WAFCON trophy

Between the dismissals an involuntarily Yasmin Mrabet own goal had given the Nigerians a lead swiftly cancelled out by Sanaa Mssoudy.

In extra-time the Super Falcons nearly conjured a remarkable victory when Gift Monday hit the bar.

In the shootout it was Morocco that prevailed. Tottenham's Rosella Ayane scored the deciding penalty.

After that drama the final was anti-climactic. Hildah Magaia scored twice in nine minutes midway through the second half and Ayane's 80th-minute reply wasn't enough.

Victory was worth $500,000 to the winning federation from an overall $2.4 million prize pot. The South African players shared $300,000 in government bonuses with talks on equal pay for the men's and women's teams accelerated.

For Morocco, which launched a professional women's league in 2020, the future also looks bright. And it does for Africa as a whole. Challengers to Nigeria have long been needed and they are finally emerging.

CONCACAF

The Euros may have had greater depth, but the CONCACAF W Championship had the World Cup holders and Olympic champions. As expected they met in the final in Guadalupe, Mexico.

The United States won, gaining revenge for their defeat at the Tokyo Games in uncannily similar fashion. In Kashima, Canada won with a 75th-minute spot-kick; this time the Americans won via a 78th-minute penalty, converted by Alex Morgan after Allysha Chapman needlessly tugged Rose Lavelle in the box.

Victory also earned the US a place at the Paris 2024 Olympics while Canada

will face Jamaica in a play-off for CONCACAF's second slot.

Jamaica won that chance by beating Costa Rica in the bronze medal match with US-based college student Kiki van Zanten's extra-time goal.

All four teams secured a place in the 2023 Women's World Cup by reaching the semi-finals with Haiti and Panama advancing to the inter-confederation play-offs.

The Reggae Girlz's joy at becoming the first Caribbean team of either gender to reach a second World Cup was tempered when were left stranded in Houston midway through their return as there were no funds to cover their luggage costs.

Manchester City's Khadija Shaw posted on Instagram: "Less than 24 hours after finishing a successful tournament and qualifying for back-to-back World Cups, only to arrive at the airport to be stuck with 24 pieces of bags and no funds to pay for them. JFF [Jamaican Football Federation] how are we getting home?"

But the biggest disappointment were hosts Mexico, unexpectedly dumped out of the competition after two matchdays, losing to both Jamaica and Haiti. They salvaged some respect by holding out against the US – despite Jacqueline Ovalle's 73rd-minute red card – until Kristen Mewis struck in the 90th minute, but failed to score a goal in the tournament.

Post-match, under-pressure coach Monica Vergara pleaded for press, public and administrators to keep the faith stating: "We must salvage the good things that are developing in our country. This women's soccer project in our country is growing and it's taking many solid steps."

On the plus side, the arrival of Spanish superstar Jenni Hermoso at Pachuca from Barcelona shows the domestic league is gaining international notice.

Trinidad & Tobago also ended pointless and goalless, but simply qualifying was an achievement given the problems within the federation in recent years.

In the semi-finals the US despatched Costa Rica and Canada beat Jamaica, both by 3-0 scorelines.

SOUTH AMERICA

Colombia hosted the Copa America Femenina and rode a wave of local support all the way to the final.

There they came up against a Brazilian team that had won seven of the event's eight finals, and 45 of 48 matches overall, so it was no great surprise when Brazil won yet again.

In front of 28,000 in Bucaramanga *As Canarinhas* were pushed hard. Colombia were the better side in the opening half-hour and posted 21 goal attempts, but few were clear-cut and none beat Gremio keeper Lorena.

Even so Brazil needed a 39th-minute penalty to triumph, won and converted by North Carolina Courage star Debinha, now the team's key player as Marta fades.

Marta, now 36, was not in Colombia, having torn her ACL in March. With Formiga retired, fellow veteran Cristiane omitted, and both Andressinha and Ludmila absent it was to a degree a new-look Brazilian team.

Their strength was defence. Built around Arsenal's Rafaelle and new Bayern Munich recruit Tainara it did not concede a goal in six matches.

Decisive...Alex Morgan scores from the spot in the CONCACAF W Championship final

> The Euros may have had greater depth, but the CONCACAF W Championship had the World Cup holders and Olympic champions

"It wasn't the beautiful game, but it was efficient," said Brazil's Swedish coach Pia Sundhage, a two-time World Cup winner with the United States.

Colombia had the consolation of a berth at both the 2023 World Cup and the 2024 Olympics. They also had the tournament's breakout player in 17-year-old Linda Caicedo, currently of Deportivo Cali, but maybe not for long.

Both teams had topped their groups winning all four games. Ecuador pushed Colombia hardest in Group A but finished fourth in the section with Paraguay advancing to the semi-finals and Chile to a fifth-place play-off. No ordinary play-off, it carried the prize of a spot in the World Cup inter-continental play-offs.

Argentina recovered from a 4-0 drubbing by Brazil to come second in Group B with Venezuela reaching the play-off. There they held Chile, thanks to a 90th-minute leveller from Manchester City signing Deyna Castellanos, but ultimately lost on penalties.

Brazil despatched Paraguay 2-0 in the semi-finals while a Caicedo goal gave Colombia victory over Argentina. *La Albiceleste* beat Paraguay in the play-off to book the third direct-entry World Cup place. Tournament top scorer Yamila Rodriguez of Boca Juniors struck twice, leaving Paraguay to join Chile in the World Cup repechage.

Colombia banked $500,000 (£410,000) as runners-up with Brazil taking home $1.5m (£1.23m). How much of that gets re-invested in both nations' notoriously under-funded women's game remains to be seen.

OCEANIA

With New Zealand already qualified for the World Cup as co-hosts, they opted to skip the OFC Women's Nations Cup, throwing the competition wide open.

Nine nations, none of whom had previously won the competition, convened in Fiji for a 16-day tournament that began with a group stage that only eliminated Vanuatu. But since these teams play too few games maybe that was just as well.

In the last eight Papua New Guinea scored twice in the last half-hour to force extra-time before beating Tonga on penalties. New Caledonia, Cook Islands and Tahiti were also eliminated.

After PNG and Fiji beat Samoa 3-0 and Solomon Islands 3-1 in the semi-finals, the pair met in front of 1,519 in Suva.

Fiji went two down after 28 minutes and, although they pulled a goal back before half-time, couldn't find an equaliser. PNG thus earned a shot at the World Cup inter-confederational play-offs.

PNG coach Nicola Demaine said: "We've got seven mothers on the team and these ladies have been together for two-and-a-half months and made massive sacrifices. They are amazing women warriors who have earned the right to take this trophy home and to represent Oceania at the next stage."

Champions again ...Brazil won their eighth Copa America Femenina crown

2022 World Cup watch

Tim Vickery and **Martin del Palacio Langer** cast their eye over the North, Central and South American players bidding to make a name for themselves in Qatar

1 PEDRO
(BRAZIL)

Could Brazil's secret World Cup weapon be a striker who was shown the door by Fiorentina after four games and has spent much of the last two years on the bench? Bizarre as it sounds, there is a real possibility that Flamengo striker Pedro will be included in the squad, an emergency option off the bench when Brazil are seeking to break down deep-lying opponents.

He offers something rare: a genuine centre-forward with penalty-area presence. Technically adept and an ice-cool finisher with a shrewd understanding of what is going on around him, he is no blunt instrument, although he is slow – hence the short spell in Italy.

After initially struggling to make his impact at a Flamengo side rich in attacking options, he is currently flying and Brazil coach Tite – who used him as a sub in a home qualifier against Venezuela – is deliberating over whether to find a space in the squad for him.

2 Santiago GIMENEZ
(MEXICO)

His father, Christian, was one of the finest foreign-born playmakers in LigaMX history, representing the the likes of Veracruz, America, Pachuca and Cruz Azul, and Santi has inherited his talent – if not his position. A classic No.9, he's always had potential but exploded this year with goals for Cruz Azul and the national team, earning him an €8m move to Feyenoord in July.

Given Raul Jimenez's poor recent form and lack of real competition, Gimenez has a very good chance of making an impression in Qatar.

3 Felix TORRES
(ECUADOR)

Ecuador made a good start to qualifying, but failed to keep a clean sheet in the first six rounds, and continued to ship goals in last year's Copa America where they underwhelmed. In came giant centre-back Felix Torres to sort it out, and Ecuador duly booked their place in Qatar with six clean sheets in the next eight rounds.

Composed and assured on the ground and extremely commanding in the air (in both penalty areas), the 25-year-old held the defensive unit together with such calm. It is something of a surprise that he is still at Mexican side Santos Laguna.

4 Luca DE LA TORRE
(USA)

Son of a Spanish father and an American mother, the cultured attacking midfielder attributes his technical style to having played with Mexicans while growing up in San Diego, California.

He was spotted by Fulham at the age of 15, an English club that has a tradition of signing American players (the likes of Brian McBride and Clint Dempsey in the past, and Tim Ream and Antonee Robinson in the current team), but Luca was unable to establish himself in the first team and joined Dutch side Heracles Almelo. His form earned a recall to the USMNT by coach Gregg Berhalter in 2021 – three years after his first cap – and a transfer to Celta Vigo this summer.

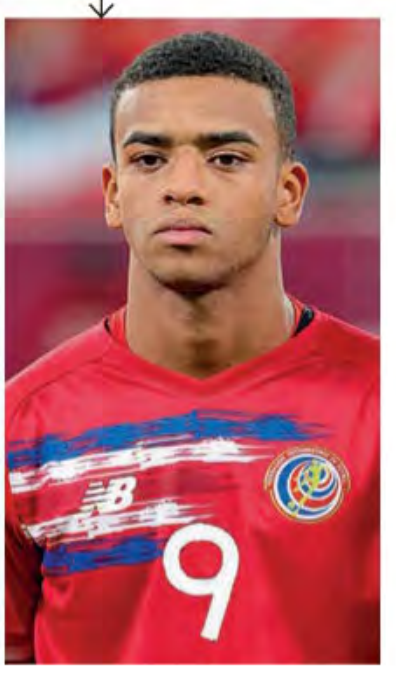
5 Facundo PELLISTRI
(URUGUAY)

New Uruguay coach Diego Alonso took a gamble when he took over for the closing rounds of qualification. He threw in at the deep end an attacking midfielder just turned 20, who had briefly been a local hero with Penarol before a move to Manchester United and a loan to Alaves, where he was not getting much game time. And Pellistri did him proud.

In all three of the wins that Uruguay put together to book their slot in Qatar, Pellistri came up with perky displays on the right flank, full of personality and creativity, running at defenders and combining with cute passes. It will be interesting to see if he keeps his place in Qatar given his limited action at club level.

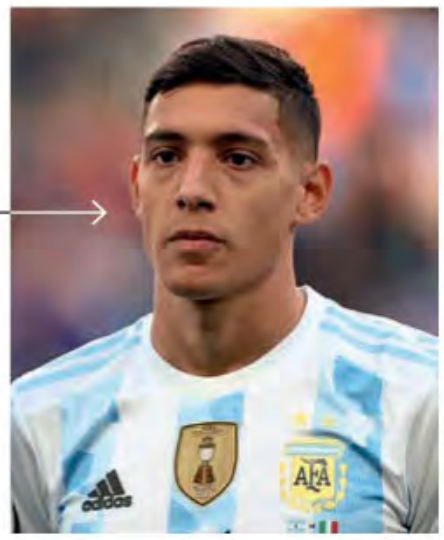
6 Jewison BENNETTE
(COSTA RICA)

A lightning-fast left-winger who exploded at Herediano to the point that he was selected, at only 17 years old, for Costa Rica's key qualifying matches against Canada and Honduras at the end of 2021.



Although he has not yet established himself as a starter in Luis Fernando Suarez's system, the manager also named him in the XI for another key showdown, against New Zealand in the inter-continental play-offs, where he set up the goal for Joel Campbell that booked the ticket to Qatar. If he sustains his progression, he will have a role to play there too.

7 Nahuel MOLINA
(ARGENTINA)



When they won the 2021 Copa America, Argentina did more than just end a 27-year wait for a senior title – they also unearthed a solution for the problem position at right-back. Molina had not featured in World Cup qualification, but during the course of the Copa made himself first choice. Although he was injured in the semi-final and missed the final decider, he has remained the undisputed first choice ever since.

His speed has given the side real balance, and as his confidence has grown he has made more of an attacking contribution as well. A typically shrewd acquisition for Udinese, his game will now surely benefit after joining Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid this summer.

8 Ike UGBO
(CANADA)

The powerful forward was born in England but learned his football in Canada, before returning to the UK to be signed by Chelsea. The Blues loaned him to various Football League clubs, and then to the Netherlands and Belgium in 2020-21, where he had his breakthrough at Cercle Brugge.

Joined Genk last year but has since moved to Troyes in Ligue 1, scoring five goals in the second half of last season. After representing his country of birth at youth level, he chose Canada over England and Nigeria in 2021, and has since won six caps, including four in World Cup qualifying.

9 ANTONY
(BRAZIL)

Some two and a half years ago, in the crunch Under-23 game Brazil needed to win to qualify for the Olympics, Antony was dropped from the team. The Sao Paulo right-winger was continually slowing down the moves by cutting infield onto his stronger left foot. Two seasons at Ajax have proved absolutely transformational. He has a far greater understanding of his role, chooses his options better, can work on either flank and is prepared to track back.

After winning Olympic gold he was promoted to the senior squad, has done well in limited opportunities and is pressing for a place in the starting line-up.

10 Gabriel SLONINA
(USA)

Towering goalkeeper with Polish roots, Slonina is one of the most exciting prospects to emerge from the United States in recent years. He recently transferred to Chelsea for a reported €15m and, at 18 years old, he has a serious chance of being part of the US squad in Qatar.

While he's unlikely to play a major role, travelling to a World Cup would provide tremendous experience for a teenager that is widely tipped to be his nation's No.1 for many years to come.

11 Mathias OLIVERA
(URUGUAY)

One of the many products of Uruguay's superb work at Under-20 level, Olivera somehow got lost in the transition to the senior ranks – until Diego Alonso took over. As the qualification campaign drew to a close, he was brought in at left-back and produced three storming displays to help Uruguay over the line.

He showed strength and lungpower in defence and attack, and the capacity to make the play from deep, especially when he helped set up the goal against Peru that sealed Uruguay's place. Wider recognition has already come, with a move to Napoli from Getafe.

12 Exequiel PALACIOS
(ARGENTINA)

Over a long, successful period, the Argentina midfield has picked itself: Leandro Paredes anchoring with Rodrigo De Paul and Giovani Lo Celso either side. But the history of the World Cup is full of players taking advantage of injuries, suspensions or loss of form to make a name for themselves. And should De Paul or Lo Celso fall by the wayside, then Palacios is an excellent standby.

Not 24 until October but part of the squad ever since Russia 2018, Palacios is strong, versatile and classy. A regular substitute during the World Cup qualifiers, he can slot into the starting line-up with no loss of quality.

13 Marcelo FLORES
(MEXICO)

Born in Canada, raised in England, and the son of a former Mexican pro, the diminutive playmaker hesitated until the last second about which national team to represent until deciding on *El Tri* last May.

Intelligent, fast and with excellent vision on the pitch, he joined Arsenal's famed academy from Ipswich Town in 2019, and was loaned to Oviedo this summer. Impressing in the Spanish second tier could see him add to this three caps and play his first World Cup at the age of 19.

14 Gonzalo PLATA
(ECUADOR)

A symbol of Ecuador's recent rise is Gonzalo Plata, a 21-year-old left-footed right-winger who combines physical strength with a goal threat. After coming through the ranks at Independiente del Valle, a wonderful breeding ground of talent, he was a key member of the Under-20 side of 2019 who were continental champions and came third in the World Cup.

Joined Valladolid from Sporting this summer after a successful loan spell and still has some maturing to do; a dependence on his left foot may mean that he struggles against top class opponents. But, at the very least, he will be an important impact substitute in Qatar.

PERSIAN JEWEL

The World Cup hopes of Iran rest largely on the shoulders of their talismanic striker Mehdi Taremi

Words: Adel Ferdowsipour

Everything kicked off on an odd, dusty pitch in Bushehr, a port city in the South of Iran where temperatures exceed 40°C in the summers and people swim in the sea at midnight to escape the extreme heat and humidity. Every day, a six-year-old Mehdi Taremi would make his way past an old mosque and through narrow alleyways to reach this peculiar ground. The pitch owes its uniqueness to a large, century-old tree right in the middle, which Mehdi and the other kids learned to make a feature of their regular football games.

"The pitch was a dust bowl. Our goalposts were placed at the opposite sides of that old tree," recalls Taremi. "Chopping it off was not an option. So, we had to find a way around it. Sometimes we made a pass to it and played one-twos with it."

Fast forward more than two decades and Mehdi Taremi has won the Portuguese League's Golden Boot, made it into the top three of the Puskas Award with a spectacular bicycle kick versus Chelsea, become Porto's most valuable player, and will head to this year's World Cup as Iran's biggest hope.

Speaking in his hometown, just metres away from that famous old tree, Taremi says: "I began playing football right here when I was six. By the time I turned 12, I knew I was talented because I often played against older kids and managed to shine.

"Football is kind of instinctive; it's in our DNA. My father and brother were both footballers. I'd say my brother was better than me, but for whatever reason, he didn't make it to the top level".

As he speaks, a few feet away a couple of kids in slippers stand holding a ball, watching on and listening in awe. It was as if time had moved backward to his childhood for a few seconds. Everywhere he goes in Bushehr, the love and admiration of the people for Taremi is evident. He gives a warm greeting to everyone and gladly obliges any photo requests.

At 21, and before making it from his local team to the Iranian Premier League, Taremi's rise was halted by a sucker punch: 18 months of mandatory military service.

"During the service, I was assigned with taking care of the camp's sports facilities and watering the grass," he remembered. "As an introvert, not being able to play the game hurt deeply. Sadly, I wasn't given enough opportunity in those days." But the 18-month interruption couldn't end his professional career. "As someone who is in love with the game, I couldn't just let go of football in my early 20s. Thankfully, I persisted and got to where I am today."

After this unwanted break came his great breakthrough. Footage of him playing football in his hometown were

Talisman...Taremi celebrates scoring in World Cup qualifying

sent to Ali Daei, a legend of Iranian football and then the head coach of Persepolis, one of the country's two giant clubs. Taremi recounts the story of being linked with one of the biggest teams in Asia with tens of millions of supporters: "I heard Daei was sitting in his office when he played that DVD. A minute later, he told his colleague to call me to come to Tehran. I went there and signed a contract with Persepolis. On the first day of training, someone apparently commented to the manager that I won't make it in football with this running style, and Daei responded that I'd be a top player one day. And from the third game on, I was a part of the starting XI."

Persepolis was Taremi's springboard. The striker developed, gained fame, and conquered the Iranian League with the Reds. He mostly dazzled with goals and moments of brilliance, but there were times he infuriated fans by missing absolute sitters. It was this inconsistency that earned him the nickname "*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*" from this commentator.

"You were spot on with this nickname," he says. "I was surrounded with noise and controversies at that stage of my career, and never performed to the full of what I was capable of. It's funny looking back at some of the good chances I missed."

Young Mehdi... Taremi as a child

However, his time in Persepolis ended on a sour note. In the summer of 2016 he agreed a move to Caykur Rizespor of Turkey, but changed his mind and returned to Persepolis to sign a two-year deal. The Turkish side protested, and a year later the Court of Arbitration for Sport handed the striker a four-month suspension and banned Persepolis from signing players for two transfer windows.

In January 2018 he left Persepolis again, for good this time, joining Al Gharafa in the Qatar Stars League. After 13 goals in 18 months, he rejected a lucrative offer to stay in the Middle East and instead embarked on a new journey. "Al Duhail were offering me $2.5 million per year, but I went to Rio Ave instead, where I earned around $200k per year," he says.

He hit the ground running in Portugal, ending his debut season as the Primeira Liga's joint-top scorer. Gradually, Portugal got to know one of his finest skills: the ability to win penalties. With ultimate craft and trickery, he leaves the referees with no choice but to point to the spot. As he puts it: "When defenders play more cautiously in order to adapt, I can play more daringly in the box."

Taremi's father, himself a famous footballer in Bushehr, recalls: "Mehdi has been good at winning penalties since childhood. He had a knack for it. I have footage of him winning penalties at the age of ten."

Where it all began... Taremi sits by the tree he used to play by

His transfer from Rio Ave to Porto saw him finally rise to prominence in European football with 49 goals and 35 assists in 96 appearances across his first three seasons. Despite being primarily a centre-forward, Sergio Conceicao has occasionally deployed him deeper.

"I value decision-making and awareness the most," says Taremi. "When I have the chance to shoot from the edge of the area, it's a 50-50 opportunity. But if I pass, then it becomes 70-30. I don't hesitate to pass but most forwards are more selfish."

Given his impact and number of appearances, it's safe to say he's the most successful Iranian in UEFA Champions League history. He has scored against Juventus and Liverpool, not to mention the stunner against Chelsea that was voted UEFA's Goal of the Season. In the votes for the 2021 Puskas Award, Taremi's bicycle kick came second, just behind Erik Lamela's rabona for Tottenham in the North London derby. "Lamela scored a more special goal," he admitted. "But I sent my bicycle kick to the far corner and maybe it could've been deemed better than Lamela's goal."

> "This is the best generation of players in a while in our national team"
>
> **Taremi on Iran's pool of talent**

If this was the highlight moment for Taremi – or indeed any Iranian – in the Champions League, the darkest hour also came in that season as well. In the away leg of Porto's last-16 tie against Juventus, he was shown two unnecessary yellow cards within three minutes to put his side Porto on the brink of elimination. The cameras captured Taremi asking the referee in bemusement: "Is this the Champions League?"

"I received my second yellow for time-wasting but I didn't mean to and hadn't heard the whistle," he recalls. "Why would I waste time in the 57th minute?

"I went straight to the dressing room. I didn't dare look at my phone or turn the TV on. I followed the match through spectators' cheers. I was praying for my close friend, Sergio Oliveira, to score. A few minutes into extra-time, I heard a loud roar from the crowd. I was wondering what's going on. The team's coordinator rushed in to tell me Oliveira has scored the winner. We hugged and cried with joy."

Taremi's suspension meant that he missed the first leg of the quarter-final, a 2-0 defeat to Chelsea. His Puskas Award contender in the second leg was spectacular, but ultimately proved little more than a consolation goal.

Nevertheless, with a domestic double, last season was the best of Taremi's career. And, following the big transfers of the likes of Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez from the Portuguese League, Taremi could be a potential target for European heavyweights, too. "My future is in Porto's hands. I'd oblige whatever they say," he says.

If Taremi is to catch the eye of any admirers, the World Cup will be a prime opportunity. He was a key player in both of Iran's last two successful World Cup qualification campaigns, with eight goals in each, and he will likely be Iran's biggest threat in Qatar. However, the lack of proper preparation and friendly matches for Iran has been a cause of great frustration.

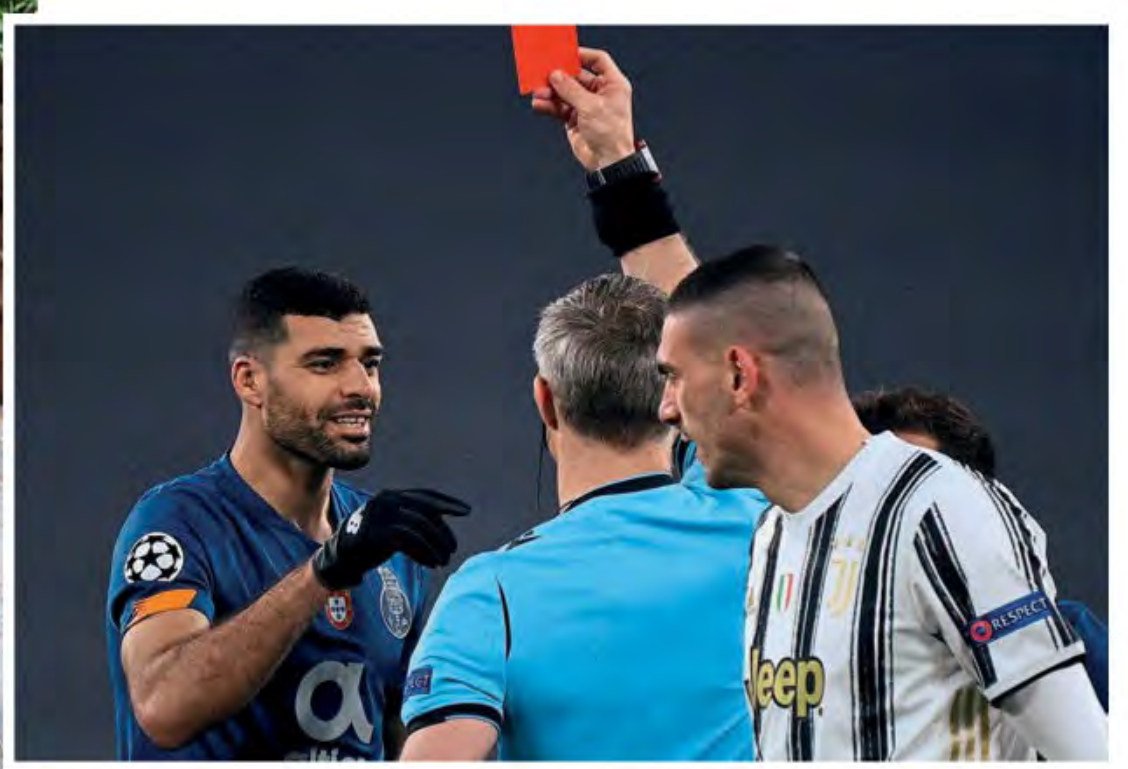
"The preparation process has been far from satisfactory," he complains. "FIFA's international match calendar has passed by without us arranging any decent friendlies. This is the best generation of players in a while in our national team, yet the planning has been catastrophic."

The lack of preparation is a particular concern, given the standard of opposition in Iran's group.

"England have some of the finest players in the world and will prove a tough test. The USA are also blessed with one of its better generations. It will be an important match in Iran, both for people and those in power, because of the political relationships between the two countries.

"With the preparation we've seen so far, we're certain to finish fourth. We should ask the authorities if they'd rather see 80 million Iranians delighted or dejected the day after the game against the USA. I'd do my best for the people to be on the happy side."

And amid all these concerns and troubles, Iran will need Taremi at his dazzling best in Qatar if they are to do the unprecedented and progress from their World Cup group.



Darkest hour...Taremi is sent off against Juventus in the Champions League last season

MICHAEL FINDLAY

"There are some very good young players, but they need to get off the island"

The Canadian-born coach of Grenada discusses his team's CONCACAF Nations League campaign and hopes of qualifying for the World Cup in 2026 and 2030

It was intriguing to see Grenada play two matches in Europe this year, against Andorra and Gibraltar. How did that come about?
When I arrived in Grenada it was a real steep curve because it was in the middle of COVID. The first time I met the team was 48 hours before a World Cup qualifying game against El Salvador. And in that process it became quite obvious that we needed more matches and to create some sort of opportunities, because the players have limited experience against other levels of competition.

I wanted us to play in Europe because we have gone through a player recruitment process. We now have about 60 per cent of our squad playing in the UK. In January we had a camp in the United States where we used all Grenadian and US-based players. And then in March we went to Europe, where we reduced travel and fatigue on players. It was fantastic. The only disappointing part was we sustained an injury in the Andorra game to one of our better players [Oliver Norburn of Peterborough United].

That's how we want to proceed because we want to be able to play in every FIFA window.

What are the challenges of a job with a Caribbean island national team?
In the Caribbean, there's a very high degree of technical competency and there's real passion, drive and interest. But tactically and organisationally, work is needed. Grenada had done very well to qualify for the Gold Cup last year and you have to praise the previous coaching staff and administration that got them to that point. But it was obvious to me that we needed to take a major step forward, in terms of support staff, administration, all of it.

On the field I think we've improved every game we've played, and we are much better organised, but we're having trouble in the final third. We were better than those [European] teams but we paid the price for not scoring.

How extensive is your search for talent in the Diaspora?
I have been amazed how many Grenadians actually exist around the world, given the fact that there are only 120,000 of them on the island. An example would be in the UK. There are about 95,000 Grenadians, so you almost have two countries. So that's how we're trying to unearth future talent, through connections and making it known that this is an opportunity for people. But we need players that believe in what Grenada is trying to produce here.

In the long-term, we are avoiding the player that just wants to have a run out of international football and thinks this is going to be great. There needs to be a connection and an emotional tie to it. I call it the four corners, in the sense that you're either playing for the flag, your family, a contract, or the future. If you have one of those motivating factors, I'm fully on board with you.

If you look at our expat group in the UK, I'd say about 50 per cent of them are playing because they have a strong family tie. QPR's Kayden Harrack, 18 years old, is playing specifically for his grandmother, because his grandmother gave his father an opportunity that has now given him that opportunity. And he feels very strongly about honouring her.

What's the potential like on the island itself? Realistically, how many international players can you get in such a small country?
It's limited, but a large amount of domestic-based players took us into League A of the Nations League. Grenada has a lovely structure, potentially. The island is split into seven different parishes. You have an ability to create what could be one of the largest academies in the world. They have a league on the island. It's not professional, and I don't see it ever becoming professional, but it could become a fertile place for the development of youth players. There are some very good young players, but they need to get off the island if they are going to find their way to professional football, and ultimately help the national team.

As a Canadian, are there lessons you can take from Canada and transplant to Grenada?
Absolutely, 100 per cent. First and foremost, the game structure; small-sided games, age-specific coaching, all the things that fit into a much more sustainable environment, a pathway for the players – that we can definitely transplant right into Grenada.

Standard base leagues would be the other; we need to use that parish system to get to those players, because travel on the island is difficult. Trying to have the players playing all in the same sort of conditions – whether that be surface, rules, size of squads.

And then the next one is vision and patience. The Canadian programme had a pathway set, there was a number of people involved for a very long time. Canada's success is incredibly exciting and warranted, but it didn't happen in the last two years.

Haiti got to the World Cup in 1974, can Grenada dream of a similar future?
For a nation like Grenada it would be a fairy tale. We would have to look at 2026 and 2030 if you're looking at World Cup scenarios. Our interest is to drive the average age down in our squad but, as those average ages go down, we need to provide them with opportunities elsewhere to be competitive.

The reality of 2026 for a nation like Grenada is that Canada, USA and Mexico will host, and that eliminates three of the top teams in the region from qualifying. CONCACAF will have three more places, so we are in with a shout. But if you are looking really long-term, it's using that as leverage to see what 2030 will look like.

Interview by Mark Gleeson

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Women's Euro 2022...squads lists for all 16 countries

Nations League

Ahead of the final round of 2022-23 UEFA Nations League action, **Nick Bidwell** previews the games that could decide who reaches the finals and how they impact on each country's World Cup preparations

Denmark v France

With Qatar 2022 looming, the pressure is on France boss Didier Deschamps to settle on his first-choice tactical system. Over the last year or so, the World Cup-winning coach has alternated between a back three and a four-man defence. Now he must plump for one or the other and this fixture in Copenhagen represents his last chance to bring clarity to the question.

In *Les Bleus*' four winless Nations League games in June, they constantly disappointed with their lack of creativity and offensive punch. For whatever reason, Deschamps has not found the right balance in the attacking third and one player particularly at risk of losing his place is Antoine Griezmann, whom many pundits in France think is past his prime. Deschamps is renowned for staying loyal to key lieutenants, but will not need reminding that Griezmann has been a ghost for quite some time.

There is every possibility that Griezmann will have to give way to up-and-coming RB Leipzig attacker Christopher Nkunku. In what would be a similar baton-passing scenario, recently-acquired Real Madrid midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni is gaining ground on Paul Pogba in the selection stakes.

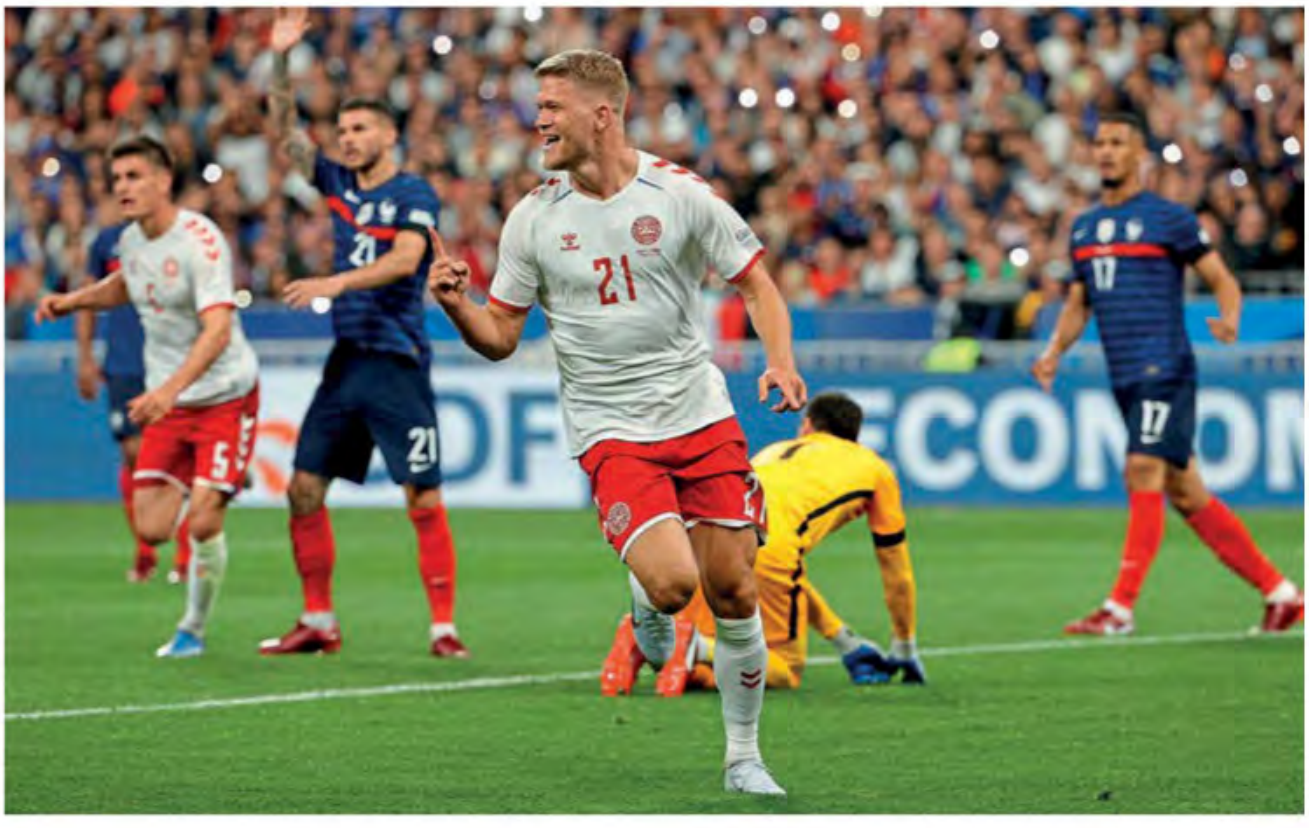
Bearing in mind that these two nations will do battle in the group phase of World Cup 2022, canny Denmark boss Kasper Hjulmand may want to keep his cards close to his chest in this head-to-head. Didier Deschamps could feel the same way.

This encounter at the Parken Stadium should shed some light on what is the most heated of Danish national team topics: who should lead the line? The candidates include Andreas Cornelius – who scored twice in the 2-1 win over France at the Stade de France in June – Kasper Dolberg, Jonas Wind or the mobile and versatile Yussuf Poulsen, who has been struggling of late with an adductor muscle injury.

Under pressure ...France forward Antoine Griezmann

Denmark's captain, centre-back Simon Kjaer, is currently on the recovery trail after tearing an ACL early this year. It remains to be seen whether he will be ready for World Cup kick-off. Victor Nelsson and Jannik Vestergaard will continue to deputise with Andreas Christensen and Joachim Andersen likely starters.

Hjulmand admitted that Nations League smash-and-grab victories in France and Austria – that put them in pole position ahead of Croatia to reach next June's finals – had an element of fortune to them. He prefers Denmark to be pro-active, mixing up the creativity and control of playmaker-in-chief Christian Eriksen with wave upon wave of attacks and intense pressing. He wants to win by taking the initiative, not merely by hanging on and playing the game of opportunists.


Brace...Denmark's Andreas Cornelius celebrates scoring in Paris in the reverse fixture

Portugal v Spain

Spanish back-line ...Jordi Alba, keeper Unai Simon, Cesar Azpilicueta and Aymeric Laporte

A 90-minute duel with the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Rafael Leao and Diogo Jota will be a severe test of the mettle of a Spanish rearguard that has lost its way recently. At times, flaky and uncoordinated, the Spanish back-line is very much the team's weak link. In the absence of a marked improvement in this department, *La Roja* can forget any hopes of World Cup glory.

Apart from outstanding Manchester City stopper Aymeric Laporte, the Spanish central defensive cupboard is poorly stocked. Barcelona's Eric Garcia has an unfortunate tendency to make unforced errors, while neither Leeds United's Diego Llorente or Inigo Martinez of Athletic Bilbao offer the necessary security at this high level.

Despite ferociously backing his defenders, coach Luis Enrique must realise, deep down, that something has to give. Villarreal stopper Pau Torres may be the answer, while a recall for veteran centre-backs Sergio Ramos or the retired Gerard Pique is not out of the question.

While Luis Enrique has his critics, he takes great heart from the fact that his team is extremely hard to beat – they sit top of the table, a point ahead of Portugal, after two wins and two draws in June's ties. Spain's imperfections are there for all to see: the shaky defence and their lack of natural finishers, yet somehow the collective still functions.

Portugal boss Fernando Santos has a number of issues to resolve whilst trying to pinch top spot and a finals spot – not least whether to deploy as the central playmaker Bruno Fernandes or Bernardo Silva, who, for all their stellar individual qualities, do not function well in tandem. The Spain encounter could well be the final stage of the World Cup grading process for the midfield pair.

Other question marks concern the left-back berth (Raphael Guerreiro or Nuno Mendes), the central midfield roles (William Carvalho, Ruben Neves, Joao Moutinho, Renato Sanches or Joao Palhinha) and the choice of attacking partners for the inimitable Cristiano Ronaldo (Diogo Jota, Andre Silva, Rafael Leao, Otavio or Joao Felix).

Will Santos continue to put his faith in the central defensive duo of Pepe and Ruben Dias? Or find room to include the much-improved PSG man Danilo?

Tactics-wise, Santos gravitated towards a 4-3-3 in June's fixtures despite usually being a staunch advocate of 4-4-2.

Iberian rivalry...action from June's 1-1 draw

England v Germany

Solitary...Harry Kane scores England's only Nations League goal in Munich from the spot

It's a three-way shootout between Hungary, Germany and Italy for the Nations League finals berth in Group A3, so England's aims in September will be to avoid relegation to League B and regroup ahead of the World Cup.

The Three Lions' miserable showing in June – zero wins, a mere two points and only one goal to their name – has left Gareth Southgate with the first real crisis of his six-year tenure. Thanks to those ten calamitous days, exemplified by the shocking 4-0 home defeat to Hungary, England's stock has fallen substantially. Remedial measures have to be adopted – and fast.

Above all, Southgate must be bolder. For far too long he has stubbornly applied the safety-first handbrake, often opting to deploy two defensive midfielders. England boast a wealth of young and thrusting attacking talent. Why not take advantage of them? Harry Kane cannot be expected to carry the front-line burden on his own.

Southgate must also be tempted to permanently plump for a three-man defence, thus unleashing the marauding wing-backs, one of the team's strongest suits at Euro 2020.

Germany's 5-2 hammering of Italy this summer was a welcome shot in the arm for the *Nationalmannschaft*. Not that anyone in Deutschland is getting carried away, especially new coach Hansi Flick who, despite remaining unbeaten in his first season in charge at the DFB, has spoken of his side's lack of consistency and conviction. After the 1-1 draw in Hungary, he accused his charges of being "too sluggish", suggesting that they had "made it easy for the opposition." Flick does not normally offer such scathing criticism of his players.

Out of form...Germany forwards Kai Havertz and Leroy Sane

Flick is certainly correct in his analysis; his Germany team still have a long way to go to reach maturity. Prior to the comprehensive victory over Italy, they often flattered to deceive, short on tempo, imagination, one-on-one intent and composed finishing. Constant intensity sits at the very core of Flick's matchday philosophy and, up to now, his Germany have come up short in this respect. He will expect a more fully-charged display at Wembley.

Especially worrying for Flick is the poor national team production levels of his "*Sorgenkinder*" (problem children): out-of form star players such as Bayern Munich wingers Leroy Sane and Serge Gnabry and Chelsea attacking midfielder Kai Havertz. The trio have given Flick a real headache: he knows they can be match-winners on their day, supremely-gifted individuals, but can never be sure when they will turn up. Flick's response to the conundrum is to publicly give them his full backing, while simultaneously insisting that they are not guaranteed to start.

Netherlands v Belgium

Three months after the humiliation of a 4-1 Nations League loss to the Dutch in Brussels, Belgium are thirsting for revenge as Group A4's top two go head-to-head in Amsterdam. However they will need a much-improved defensive performance to achieve it. The *Diables Rouges'* back-line was a total shambles in that derby hammering in June, and there is an ever-growing feeling in the Belgian media that a central defensive unit featuring both Jan Vertonghen (35) and Toby Alderweireld (33) is just too long in the tooth.

Belgium coach Roberto Martinez continues to stick by the duo, though he has made one important change to his three-man back-line, bringing in Wolves ace Leander Dendoncker – normally a midfielder – on the right side of the defence. Dendoncker has admirably risen to the challenge, but nevertheless needs more game time to completely fit in.

Some claim, with some justification, that Belgium do not have a sufficiently strong bench. If Martinez is sensible, he will use the trip to the Dutch capital to put fringe players such as striker Lois Openda, new Milan playmaker Charles De Ketelaere and defensive midfielder Amadou Onana through their paces. Young Reims centre-back Wout Faes is another who could come into contention.

The mobile and explosive Openda, who recently swapped Club Brugge for Lens in France, could be one watch. He scored on his national team debut against Poland in June and, according to Martinez, the 22-year-old brings something new to the Red Devil table. "Openda has a totally different profile to all the other attackers in our squad," declared Martinez.

Thrashing...Dutch players celebrate their 4-1 win over Belgium in June

One to watch...Belgium striker Lois Openda

Dutch coach Louis van Gaal will be using this match to thrash out a number of difficult personnel decisions. Virgil van Dijk's two partners in a three-man defence (Nathan Ake, Jurrien Timber, Stefan de Vrij or Matthijs de Ligt)? And who to line up alongside goal-hungry free spirit Memphis Depay in attack? Van Gaal regularly has deployed Steven Bergwijn in that role, but, in truth, the latter is too similar in style to Depay. A switch to three up front with wingers Cody Gakpo and Noa Lang (or Bergwijn) deployed either side of Depay would present a different option, while a more conventional centre-forward type such as Besiktas' Wout Weghorst or Antwerp's Vincent Janssen may better suit the Van Gaal operating manual.

Janssen, once of AZ and Tottenham, must have thought it was a dream when he was recently recalled to the *Oranje* fold. Now 28, he had not played for the Netherlands in almost five years and for the last three seasons was out-of-sight and out-of-mind in Mexico with the Monterrey club. A typical move from the always-unorthodox Van Gaal: "Janssen fits in my system. I'm looking for a point of contact in attack, a reference point."

Ukraine

OLEG ZADERNOVSKY

Football returns to war-torn Ukraine

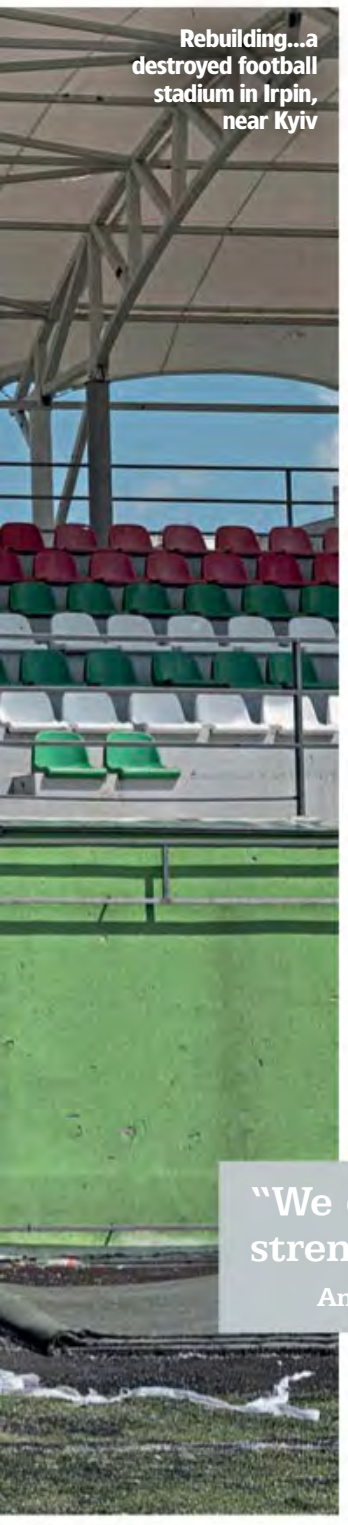
Against all the odds, and with careful restrictions in place, the 2022-23 Ukrainian domestic league season is underway

War and football have been intertwined in the minds of Ukrainians for many decades.

In August 1942, just over a year after the Nazi invasion of Ukraine, a football match took place in Kyiv between the Ukrainian team – featuring several professional players – and Wehrmacht soldiers. Thousands watched on as the Ukrainian side defeated their German occupiers in a clash that was later nicknamed "The Death Match", after four of the players involved for the home team – who had all played for Dynamo Kyiv before the war – were shot.

While the historical truth of the story is murky to say the least, popular mythology says that the Ukrainian players stood up to their invaders, defeated them on the pitch, and died as heroes. Now, 80 years on, this image of footballers refusing to lie down in the face of foreign invaders persists. Ever since the Russian invasion, the connection between football and war has returned to Ukraine.

There have been many victims in the war so far. Among them is 47-year-old Serhiy Balanchuk, who played alongside Serhiy Rebrov and Andriy Shevchenko in the Dynamo Kyiv team that won the Ukrainian title in 1995-96. After retirement, Balanchuk successfully worked as a lawyer, and volunteered on the front line at the beginning of the war. He died after artillery



Rebuilding...a destroyed football stadium in Irpin, near Kyiv

shelling in the Donetsk region.

Sadly for Ukrainians, stories such as this have become a part of reality. Football, just like much else, is attempting to continue in the "new normal".

The new season is taking place in an environment without precedent. For the first time, the league will be held in a country where there is a full-scale war.

Recognising the symbolism of a new campaign getting underway, the Ukrainian Premier League (UPL) chose August 23, the Day of the National Flag, as the kick-off date. A day later, Ukraine marked the 31st anniversary of its independence.

Matches in the 16-club format are being played at stadiums in the capital city, as well as the Kyiv, Ternopil, Lviv and Zakarpattia regions, which currently are relatively safe. They are being held according to a Special Security Protocol (SSP), which doesn't allow spectators to enter the stadium. A maximum of 280 people may be present, including referees, security officials, medics, police and journalists, as well as the players and coaching staff.

Each stadium has protective shelters located no more than 500 metres away or inside the arena itself. When the air raid signal sounds, the referee will immediately blow the whistle to stop the match. The decision to continue the game is made later. If the stop lasts more than an hour, the match may be rescheduled; if less, players get ten minutes to warm up.

> **"We do this in order to show our spirit, strength and invincibility"**
> Andriy Pavelko, president of the Ukrainian Football Association

Title favourites...Dynamo Kyiv celebrate a goal during the Champions League qualifiers

"This UPL season is of great importance for Ukraine," said Andriy Pavelko, president of the Ukrainian Football Association (UAF). "It is for the soldiers and officers on the front line, for all Ukrainians. We are fighting for freedom and victory in the name of our future. We do this in order to show our spirit, strength and invincibility."

The war has already made significant adjustments to the Ukrainian football calendar. For the first time since its first edition in 2004, the Ukrainian Super Cup was cancelled, while there will also be no Ukrainian Cup.

In addition, two clubs will not take part in the new UPL season. FC Mariupol, because of the Russian occupation, and Desna due to the fact that their stadium in Chernihiv was almost razed to the ground by rocket attacks from Russian aircrafts. Both will keep their places in the UPL, but will be replaced for this season by Metalist Kharkiv and FC Kryvbas, the top two in last season's second tier.

Dynamo Kyiv are the undisputed favourites in the championship race. The club has relied on the Ukrainian graduates of their academy for several seasons and have retained almost all of their best players. But the situation with Shakhtar Donetsk is completely different. Since the Russian aggression, they have lost 15 foreign players, including Dodo (Fiorentina), Tete (Lyon), Manor Solomon (Fulham), Marcos Antonio (Lazio) and David Neres (Benfica).

Dodo and Neres were sold for transfer fees, but almost everyone else left Shakhtar due to the controversial provision adopted by FIFA, which allowed foreign players to leave Ukrainian and Russian clubs.

"Before this FIFA decision, the clubs paid us money, because they thought that they would still need to buy players, and they bargained with us to the last," explained Shakhtar CEO Serhiy Palkin. "And then FIFA releases its decision and gives us a week. Well, how can I agree with all interested parties in a week? Agents and all the clubs that were in agreements regarding our players realised that they could pay no attention to us."

The club have demanded up to £43 million in lost transfer fees from FIFA, but for now the situation remains unresolved.

In many ways it is business as usual ahead of a new Ukrainian season; loud statements, intriguing stories, transfers coming and going. The only new element is the war, with all of its terrible, ensuing consequences.

Pavelko sums up the mood of Ukrainians: "The current season in Ukraine is truly unique. Football for peace! I am sure that it is football that will give additional energy and strengthen the faith of society in the final success on all fronts!"

Exodus...Many of the stars of Shakhtar's 2021 Super Cup win have now left the club

Japan

JOHN DUERDEN

Urawa Reds reach the final

Japanese side come out on top in eastern half of the AFC Champions League

It has been another lengthy Asian Champions League campaign but at least now we know the identity of one finalist – and it is a familiar one. In the eastern zone semi-final meeting between two two-time winners, on August 25, Urawa Reds of Japan defeated South Korea's Jeonbuk Motors courtesy of a penalty shootout. The Reds will, however, have to wait until February to find out their opponents in the two-legged final.

That is partly because the tournament is split into two geographic zones until the big game. The western zone, with domestic leagues just starting and the World Cup approaching, will not play their knockout stages until early 2023. There is also the fact that the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is in the process of changing the competition from a spring-autumn schedule in 2022, to follow the European calendar from 2023-24.

Urawa breezed through the knockout stages but met their match in Jeonbuk in the semi-final. Both are giants of Asian football. The Korean powerhouse lifted the trophy in 2006 and 2016 and Urawa did the same in 2007 and 2017 and they have both lost the final once too. So it was no surprise that the semi-final at the Saitama Stadium – Urawa's home and one of the continent's iconic venues – was closely fought.

Urawa took an early lead through Yusuke Matsuo but Jeonbuk levelled

Victorious... Urawa Reds' players celebrate winning the shootout

Late drama...Jeonbuk thought they'd won the semi-final after taking the lead in extra-time

before the break thanks to a penalty from Paik Seung-ho, a one-time Barcelona prodigy. Urawa had the better chances but the Koreans looked to have triumphed deep into extra-time as Han Kyo-won scored. Then, with 120 minutes on the clock, Urawa's Kasper Junker prodded home from close range to take the game to penalties.

Jeonbuk missed three out of four and ended up losing 3-1 and that was that. With a third extra-time period in the space of a week, it was no surprise that the Koreans were exhausted. They will now return home to focus on the K-League title battle with Ulsan Horangi.

It was a thrilling end to a busy few days. A week earlier, eight teams from the eastern zone started out in Japan: one each from Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong, with two from South Korea and three from the host nation.

Vissel Kobe and their superstar Andres Iniesta attracted much of the focus – could the Spaniard add an Asian title to his four UEFA Champions League wins with Barcelona? Kobe went into their all-Japanese last-16 clash with Yokohama F.Marinos while still in the relegation zone of the J.League. Yet despite that, and with Iniesta missing through injury, Kobe overturned the form book and beat Yokohama, the domestic league leaders who are coached by Kevin Muscat.

The Reds will, however, have to wait until February to find out their opponents in the two-legged final

Kobe then came up against Jeonbuk in the last eight and ended up losing 3-1 after extra-time in a game that could have gone either way. Iniesta's Asian dreams will have to wait and the focus is now on avoiding relegation into Japan's second tier.

Urawa eased into the semi-final by knocking out Southeast Asia's two hopefuls. The first was a 5-0 thrashing of Johor Darul Tazim. The Malaysian powerhouse have made major strides in recent years but were handed a reminder of how far they have to go to bridge the gap from being regional powers to continental contenders. Urawa then went on to dismiss Pathum United of Thailand 4-0, in another blow to Southeast Asian pride.

Pathum, who dismissed Kitchee of Hong Kong in the second round, are another ambitious club from the region who are now starting to get out of group stages, though the pandemic has perhaps helped with centralised venues and fewer home and away encounters. If their, and Johor's, progress continues however then semi-final and final appearances will surely come before too long.

Although they may not admit it publicly, AFC officials were hoping that Vissel Kobe went all the way to the final. The prospect of the Japanese team and their superstar Iniesta being within touching distance of the title would have garnered the kind of international headlines that the tournament is in desperate need of. As it is, after the excitement of the titanic semi-final tussle, Urawa will have to wait six months to play their next match.

It does at least give their coach Ricardo Rodriguez plenty of time to think about how his players can beat the best from the west. Al-Hilal of Saudi Arabia have won two of the last three titles – beating Urawa in the 2019 final – to end the dominance from Korea and Japan, and the Riyadh club are once again fancied to make the final. We will all have to wait and see but it will take some time.

On the up...BG Pathum United of Thailand reached the quarter-finals

Disappointing...Andres Iniesta missed Vissel Kobe's exit due to injury

East Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

Review

Victory for World-Cup bound Japan on home soil

Hosts win East Asian Championship as they prepare for Qatar 2022

Japan lifted the East Asian Championship trophy for only the second time in their history in late July, defeating fellow World Cup qualifiers South Korea 3-0 in the final round of games to take top spot.

The Samurai Blue finished in top spot of the (usually) biennial tournament with seven points from three games, one ahead of the Koreans. China took third place with four, while Hong Kong finished last with zero points to show for their efforts.

Although winning is always welcome, this is a fairly low-key tournament, meaning that all four had their own targets and ambitions for the competition. The top two were both looking to the World Cup that kicks off in November; neither Japan nor South Korea were able to call upon their European-based players, busy with their clubs' pre-seasons, so it gave domestic stars a chance to show what they could do.

For Japan, who stepped in as hosts after China pulled out, Shuto Machino did just that. The 22-year-old striker had never previously represented his country, but the Shonan Bellmare star netted three times in three games to finish as joint-top scorer in the goalscoring stakes. Yuki Soma was the other, and doubling his appearance tally and his three goals mean that the 25-year-old will be in with a chance of being named in the squad to face the United States and Ecuador in September's friendlies.

What will also please coach Hajime Moriyasu is that the defence was not breached at all in the 270 minutes of football. Even against their closest

Breakout star... Japan's Shuto Machino lifts the trophy

rivals South Korea, the back-line looked comfortable.

It started with a 6-0 thrashing of Hong Kong with Soma, Machina and Takuma Nishimura getting two each. The 0-0 draw with China was a reminder that Japan still can lack ruthlessness in front of goal despite having all the possession, which meant that the comfortable victory over the Koreans was a welcome way to end.

"The players have worked hard to win the championship from the moment they were selected," said Moriyasu afterwards. "There were some who we worked with for the first time and they worked hard. Everyone did their best.

"The players have raised their reputations and the value of the J.League has also been raised through this tournament. Honestly, I'm very happy but the goal is the World Cup in Qatar. Until then, I will keep working hard."

For South Korea, it was a second successive 3-0 defeat to Japan and maintains the team's uncertain form. Despite four years in charge, the jury is still out on coach Paulo Bento and the Portuguese boss was heavily criticised after the loss to Japan with headlines of hopeless defending, helpless attacking and an inability to make effective in-game changes.

"Japan were on a different level to us," Bento said. "The result was fair. We did our best, but we made a lot of mistakes. In a match like this, if we make that many mistakes, we pay a price. We need to analyse today's game and prepare well for the World Cup."

China did what they set out to do and more. For the first time since before the pandemic, the men's national team provided some cheer for fans back home. Aleksandar Jankovic, the country's Under-23 manager, had selected a squad featuring just four players with senior national team experience. If South Korea and Japan were preparing for the 2022 World Cup, Team Dragon are looking towards 2026.

Joint-top scorer... Japan's Yuki Soma

> "I'm very happy but the goal is the World Cup in Qatar"
> Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu

It didn't start well with a 3-0 defeat against South Korea. Yet they bounced back in the second game with a 0-0 draw against hosts Japan in a well-organised and committed performance. It ended with a 1-0 victory over Hong Kong, a result that was expected but only just against an improving opponent.

"As a coach, I am not satisfied and there are many areas in which we can improve," said Jankovic. "But we are a young team and have not participated in the international competition for three consecutive years. We have improved defensively but we still need a lot of improvement in attack."

Hong Kong arrived fresh after a first Asian Cup qualification since 1968 as an outfit more focused on attacking than in the past. It was always going to be difficult against three stronger teams and an opening game 6-0 thrashing at the hands of Japan. It was a chastening experience and result. It was followed by losses to Korea and China. Three games played, three defeats, no goals scored and ten conceded. If nothing else, it shows coach Jorn Andersen how much work needs to be done.

The same can be said of Japan, and especially South Korea, ahead of the World Cup.

Runners-up...South Korea players react during their 3-0 defeat to Japan in Toyota

Bottom two...China defeated Hong Kong 1-0 in their final game

British Virgin Islands

STEVE MENARY

Connecting with the homeland

A strengthening of links between the British Virgin Islands and Britain is slowly paying off

British Virgin Islands...the team line up ahead of their CONCACAF Nations League clash with Cayman Islands

The British overseas territory has typically been among the world's weakest sides, but the BVI FA was making progress by developing juniors until Hurricane Irma hit in 2017.

Rebuilding in every sense has been necessary but president Andy Bickerton's plan of connecting with the game in his native Dorset is bearing fruit. Bickerton recruited Dan Neville, a former academy coach at Premier League side Bournemouth, as technical director and promising young players are furthering their education on and off the pitch in the UK.

Five BVI players are now at Neville's Champions academy, which is based at Southern Premier League side Dorchester Town and combines sixth form study with football. The BVI contingent plays in the Tactics or Hampshire Premier League for Champions, while Neville looks for opportunities.

One player is on a sports scholarship at National League side Eastleigh, Alejandro Santos is going to Loughborough University, and Josh Bertie joined Southern League Winchester City for the 2022-23 season and scored within a minute of his debut at Alton.

Nations League... BVI forward Charley McMillan-Lopez in action against Cuba

The UK connections extended to a training camp at Winchester College last October and a friendly with Anguilla at Bisham Abbey in January, which was lost 2-1. Another UK training camp will be held this September.

This progress in developing young players was recognised in a review by former England manager Steve McClaren for FIFA's Talent Ecosystem report. "We came out very favourably," says Neville.

"On the back of that review, we made a successful application to FIFA's Talent Development Scheme. We have a player pathway and now we will have a dedicated person for that."

FIFA funding has enabled the BVI FA to grow its workforce to 19 people including seven full-time staff. "FIFA funding has improved but we don't hit all the benchmarks because of the size of the country," adds Neville.

A population of just 30,000 will always be a limitation, but the BVI has 11 sides – nine on the main island, Tortola, and two on Virgin Gorda – and is improving at international level.

In the first CONCACAF Nations League in 2019, the BVI lost all four games in League C to Bahamas and Bonaire but the latest edition proved more rewarding under former Ipswich Town striker Chris Kiwomya, who took over as head coach in 2021.

The BVI had been unable to play at home since Hurricane Irma devastated the stadium in Tortola, but the AO Shirley Recreation Ground in Road Town has been brought up to scratch, allowing the BVI to entertain the Cayman Islands in June and secure a 1-1 draw.

> The BVI FA was making progress until Hurricane Irma hit...rebuilding in every sense has been necessary

In the return in George Town, midfielder Jamie Wilson – who also plays in the UK for Bournemouth Poppies – equalised after half-time to earn another 1-1 draw. After that promising start, a BVI side missing key players were crushed 6-0 away to Puerto Rico and defeat must be avoided in the return next March to escape bottom place for a second Nations League campaign in a row.

Even if that happens, the Nations League brings regular opportunities and Neville wants progress. "We've got to evolve and improve on this campaign, which was an improvement on the last one," says Neville as the BVI look to shake off their record as one of the world's weakest teams.

SEPTEMBER 6 – SEPTEMBER 30

Global diary

Games and dates to pencil in for the month ahead

UEFA Nations League

The Nations League concludes at the end of September with the four finalists still to be decided (see pages 80-84), plus eye-catching fixtures throughout Leagues B, C and D, including Scotland v Republic of Ireland, Norway v Serbia and Greece v Northern Ireland.

Rematch... Republic of Ireland beat Scotland 3-0 in Dublin in June

WSL Kick-off

A brand-new season of the Women's Super League begins on September 10, starting with Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United. The first weekend of the campaign also includes a meeting between last season's third and second-placed teams, Manchester City v Arsenal. British-based viewers can watch most of the fixtures on the BBC, Sky Sports or online via the FA Player.

WSL holders... Chelsea Women

Qatar warm-ups

While Europe completes its Nations League campaign, the rest of the world is beginning Qatar 2022 preparations with inter-continental warm-up matches. The World Cup hosts will test themselves against Canada and Chile, while England manager Gareth Southgate will be keeping a close eye on USA's clashes with Japan and Saudi Arabia. Elsewhere, Australia will face their island neighbours New Zealand for the first time since 2011.

Under-20 Elite League

Founded in 2017, the Under-20 Elite League is an international youth tournament for Under-20 teams from across Europe, and its fourth edition will begin in September. Eight countries will take part, with Italy attempting to defend their crown against England, Czech Republic, Norway, Poland, Germany, Romania and Portugal.

AFCON qualifiers moved

To allow for Africa's five World Cup-bound teams to prepare adequately with friendlies against countries from other confederations, matchdays three and four of the AFCON 2023 qualifiers, originally scheduled for September, have now been postponed until March.

CAF Super Cup

It's an all-Moroccan clash in this year's African Super Cup, as Champions League winners Wydad take on CAF Confederation Cup holders RS Berkane at the Benjamin Mkapa National Stadium in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. The match takes place on September 10, while over the same weekend the first leg of the opening preliminary rounds of the 2022-23 campaigns in each competition also begin.

Europa kick-offs

In the same week that the Champions League commences, the Europa League and Europa Conference League group stages also begin. The first matchday is on Thursday, September 8.

5 unmissable matches

- **Manchester City v Tottenham Hotspur, September 10**
  Antonio Conte's Tottenham can justify their pre-season optimism when they visit the Premier League champions.
- **Borussia Dortmund v Schalke, September 17**
  The always fierce *Revierderby* returns to the Bundesliga after Schalke spent last term in the second tier. It's sure to be an explosive return at the Westfalenstadion.

Back in the Bundesliga ...Dortmund v Schalke returns to the German top flight in 2022-23

- **Chelsea v Liverpool, September 18**
  Shaky starts by each side mean that this meeting could be key for both clubs in defining the rest of their seasons.
- **Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid, September 18**
  The first Madrid derby of the season. Can Atletico mount a title challenge after last season's disappointment?
- **Chelsea Women v Manchester City Women, September 25**
  Two of the WSL favourites meet, with several of England's European champions involved, including Millie Bright, Fran Kirby, Chloe Kelly and Keira Walsh.

WOMEN'S EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP 2022

AUSTRIA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Manuela **ZINSBERGER**	(26) 19.10.95	Arsenal (ENG)
21	Isabella **KRESCHE**	(23) 28.11.98	St. Polten
23	Jasmin **PAL**	(25) 24.08.96	SC Sand (GER)

DEFENDERS

2	Marina **GEORGIEVA**	(25) 13.04.97	SC Sand (GER)
3	Katharina **NASCHENWENG**	(24) 16.12.97	Hoffenheim (GER)
4	Celina **DEGEN**	(21) 16.05.01	Cologne (GER)
6	Katharina **SCHIECHTL**	(29) 27.02.93	Werder Bremen (GER)
7	Carina **WENNINGER**	(31) 06.02.91	Roma (ITA)
11	Viktoria **SCHNADERBECK**	(31) 04.01.91	Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)
12	Laura **WIENROTHER**	(23) 13.01.99	Arsenal (ENG)
13	Virginia **KIRCHBERGER**	(29) 25.05.01	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)
19	Verena **HANSHAW**	(28) 20.01.94	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Annabel **SCHASCHING**	(19) 26.07.02	Sturm Graz
8	Barbara **DUNST**	(24) 25.09.97	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)
9	Sarah **ZADRAZIL**	(29) 19.02.93	Bayern Munich (GER)
10	Laura **FEIERSINGER**	(29) 05.04.93	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)
14	Marie-Therese **HOBINGER**	(21) 01.07.01	FC Zurich (SUI)
16	Jasmin **EDER**	(29) 08.10.92	St. Polten
17	Sarah **PUNTIGAM**	(29) 13.10.92	Cologne (GER)
18	Julia **HICKELSBERGER-FULLER**	(22) 01.08.99	St. Polten

FORWARDS

15	Nicole **BILLA**	(26) 05.03.96	Hoffenheim (GER)
20	Lisa **MAKAS**	(30) 11.05.92	Austria Wien
22	Stefanie **ENZINGER**	(31) 25.11.90	St. Polten

COACH

Irene **FUHRMANN** (41) 23.09.80

BELGIUM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Nicky **EVRARD**	(27) 26.05.95	OH Leuven
12	Diede **LEMEY**	(25) 07.10.96	Sassuolo (ITA)
21	Lisa **LICHTFUS**	(22) 29.12.99	Dijon (FRA)

DEFENDERS

2	Davina **PHILTJENS**	(33) 26.02.89	Sassuolo (ITA)
4	Amber **TYSIAK**	(22) 26.01.00	OH Leuven
15	Jody **VANGHELUWE**	(24) 15.07.97	Club YLA
17	Charlotte **TISON**	(24) 21.04.98	Anderlecht
18	Laura **DE NEVE**	(27) 09.10.94	Anderlecht
19	Sari **KEES**	(21) 17.02.01	OH Leuven
22	Laura **DELOOSE**	(29) 18.06.93	Anderlecht

MIDFIELDERS

6	Tine **DE CAIGNY**	(25) 09.06.97	Hoffenheim (GER)
8	Feli **DELACAUW**	(20) 04.04.02	Gent
10	Justine **VANHAEVERMAET**	(30) 29.04.92	Reading (ENG)
16	Marie **MINNAERT**	(23) 05.05.99	Club YLA
20	Julie **BIESMANS**	(28) 04.05.94	PSV (NED)
23	Kassandra **MISSIPO**	(24) 03.02.98	FC Basel (SUI)

FORWARDS

3	Ella **VAN KERKHOVEN**	(28) 20.11.93	Anderlecht
5	Sarah **WIJNANTS**	(22) 13.10.99	Anderlecht
7	Hannah **EURLINGS**	(19) 01.01.03	OH Leuven
9	Tessa **WULLAERT**	(29) 19.03.93	Fortuna Sittard (NED)
11	Janice **CAYMAN**	(33) 12.10.88	Lyon (FRA)
13	Elena **DHONT**	(24) 27.03.98	FC Twente (NED)
14	Davinia **VANMECHELEN**	(22) 30.08.99	Standard Liege

COACH

Ives **SERNEELS** (49) 16.10.72

DENMARK

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lene **CHRISTENSEN**	(22) 04.02.00	Rosenborg (NOR)
16	Katrine **SVANE**	(24) 17.03.98	AGF
22	Laura **WORSOE**	(20) 28.10.01	Odense Q

DEFENDERS

3	Stine **BALLISAGER**	(28) 03.01.94	Valerenga (NOR)
4	Rikke **SEVECKE**	(26) 15.06.96	Everton (ENG)
5	Simone **BOYE**	(30) 03.03.92	Arsenal (ENG)
11	Katrine **VEJE**	(31) 19.06.91	Rosengard (SWE)
18	Luna **GEVITZ**	(28) 03.03.94	BK Hacken (SWE)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Sara **THRIGE**	(26) 15.05.96	Milan (ITA)
6	Karen **HOLMGAARD**	(23) 28.01.99	Turbine Potsdam (GER)
7	Sanne **TROELSGAARD**	(33) 15.08.88	Reading (ENG)
8	Sara **HOLMGAARD**	(23) 28.01.99	Turbine Potsdam (GER)
13	Sofie **JUNGE PEDERSEN**	(30) 24.04.92	Juventus (ITA)
14	Sofie **BREDGAARD**	(20) 18.01.02	Rosengard (SWE)
15	Kathrine **KUHL**	(19) 05.07.03	FC Nordsjaelland
19	Janni **THOMSEN**	(22) 16.02.00	Valerenga (NOR)
23	Sofie **SVAVA**	(21) 11.08.00	Real Madrid (ESP)

FORWARDS

9	Nadia **NADIM**	(34) 02.01.88	Racing Louisville (USA)
10	Pernille **HARDER**	(29) 15.11.92	Chelsea (ENG)
12	Stine **LARSEN**	(26) 24.01.96	BK Hacken (SWE)
17	Rikke **MARIE MADSEN**	(24) 09.08.97	Madrid CFF (ESP)
20	Signe **BRUUN**	(24) 06.04.98	Manchester United (ENG)
21	Mille **GEJL**	(22) 23.09.99	BK Hacken (SWE)

COACH

Lars **SONDERGAARD** (63) 05.04.59

ENGLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mary **EARPS**	(29) 07.03.93	Manchester United
13	Hannah **HAMPTON**	(21) 16.11.00	Aston Villa
21	Ellie **ROEBUCK**	(22) 23.09.99	Manchester City

DEFENDERS

2	Lucy **BRONZE**	(30) 28.10.91	Barcelona (ESP)
3	Rachel **DALY**	(30) 06.12.91	Houston Dash (USA)
5	Alex **GREENWOOD**	(28) 07.09.93	Manchester City
6	Millie **BRIGHT**	(28) 21.08.93	Chelsea
12	Jess **CARTER**	(24) 17.10.97	Chelsea
15	Demi **STOKES**	(30) 12.12.91	Manchester City
22	Lotte **WUBBEN-MOY**	(23) 11.01.99	Arsenal

MIDFIELDERS

4	Keira **WALSH**	(25) 08.04.97	Manchester City
8	Leah **WILLIAMSON**	(25) 29.03.97	Arsenal
10	Georgia **STANWAY**	(23) 03.01.99	Manchester City
14	Fran **KIRBY**	(29) 29.06.93	Chelsea
16	Jill **SCOTT**	(35) 02.02.87	Aston Villa
20	Ella **TOONE**	(22) 02.09.99	Manchester United

FORWARDS

7	Beth **MEAD**	(27) 09.05.95	Arsenal
9	Ellen **WHITE**	(33) 09.05.89	Manchester City
11	Lauren **HEMP**	(21) 07.08.00	Manchester City
17	Nikita **PARRIS**	(28) 10.03.94	Arsenal
18	Chloe **KELLY**	(24) 15.01.98	Manchester City
19	Bethany **ENGLAND**	(28) 03.06.94	Chelsea
23	Alessia **RUSSO**	(23) 08.02.99	Manchester United

COACH

Sarina **WIEGMAN** (NED) (52) 26.10.69

FINLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Katriina **TALASLAHTI**	(21) 21.09.00	FC Fleury (FRA)
12	Anna **TAMMINEN**	(27) 30.10.94	Hammarby (SWE)
23	Tinja-Riikka **KORPELA**	(36) 05.05.86	Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)

DEFENDERS

2	Elli **PIKKUJAMSA**	(22) 24.10.99	KIF Orebro DFF (SWE)
3	Tuija **HYYRYNEN**	(34) 10.03.88	Juventus (ITA)
5	Emma **KOIVISTO**	(27) 25.09.94	Brighton & Hove Albion (ENG)
6	Anna **AUVINEN**	(35) 02.03.87	Sampdoria (ITA)
11	Nora **HEROUM**	(27) 20.07.94	Lazio (ITA)
15	Natalia **KUIKKA**	(26) 01.12.95	Portland Thorns (USA)
16	Anna **WESTERLUND**	(33) 09.04.89	Aland United

MIDFIELDERS

4	Ria **OLING**	(27) 15.09.94	Rosengard (SWE)
8	Olga **AHTINEN**	(24) 15.08.97	Linkopings FC (SWE)
9	Juliette **KEMPPI**	(28) 14.05.94	IFK Kalmar (SWE)
10	Emmi **ALANEN**	(31) 30.04.91	Kristianstads DFF (SWE)
13	Jenny **DANIELSSON**	(27) 30.08.94	AIK (SWE)
19	Essi **SAINIO**	(35) 09.09.86	HJK
20	Eveliina **SUMMANEN**	(24) 29.05.98	Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)

FORWARDS

7	Adelina **ENGMAN**	(27) 11.10.94	Hammarby (SWE)
14	Heidi **KOLLANEN**	(25) 06.06.97	KIF Orebro DFF (SWE)
17	Sanni **FRANSSI**	(27) 19.03.95	Real Sociedad (ESP)
18	Linda **SALLSTROM**	(33) 13.07.88	Vittsjo GIK (SWE)
21	Amanda **RANTANEN**	(24) 11.05.98	KIF Orebro DFF (SWE)
22	Jutta **RANTALA**	(22) 11.11.99	Vittsjo GIK (SWE)

COACH

Anna **SIGNEUL** (SWE) (61) 20.05.61

FRANCE

GOALKEEPERS

1	Mylene **CHAVAS**	(24) 07.01.98	Bordeaux
16	Justine **LEROND**	(22) 29.02.00	Metz
21	Pauline **PEYRAUD-MAGNIN**	(30) 17.03.92	Juventus (ITA)

DEFENDERS

3	Wendie **RENARD**	(31) 20.07.90	Lyon
4	Marion **TORRENT**	(30) 17.04.92	Montpellier
5	Aissatou **TOUNKARA**	(27) 16.03.95	Atletico Madrid (ESP)
7	Sakina **KARCHAOUI**	(26) 26.01.96	Paris Saint-Germain
13	Selma **BACHA**	(21) 09.11.00	Lyon
19	Griedge **MBOCK BATHY**	(27) 26.02.95	Lyon
22	Eve **PERISSET**	(27) 24.12.94	Bordeaux
23	Hawa **CISSOKO**	(25) 10.04.97	West Ham United (ENG)

MIDFIELDERS

2	Ella **PALIS**	(23) 24.03.99	Bordeaux
6	Sandie **TOLETTI**	(26) 13.07.95	Levante (ESP)
8	Grace **GEYORO**	(25) 02.07.97	Paris Saint-Germain
14	Charlotte **BILBAULT**	(32) 05.06.90	Bordeaux
15	Kenza **DALI**	(30) 31.07.91	Everton (ENG)

FORWARDS

9	Marie-Antoinette **KATOTO**	(23) 01.11.98	Paris Saint-Germain
10	Clara **MATEO**	(24) 28.11.97	Paris FC
11	Kadidiatou **DIANI**	(27) 01.04.95	Paris Saint-Germain
12	Melvine **MALARD**	(22) 28.06.00	Lyon
17	Sandy **BALTIMORE**	(22) 19.02.00	Paris Saint-Germain
18	Ouleymata **SARR**	(26) 08.10.95	Paris FC
20	Delphine **CASCARINO**	(25) 05.02.97	Lyon

COACH

Corinne **DIACRE** (47) 04.08.74

GERMANY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Merle **FROHMS**	(27) 28.01.95	Eintracht Frankfurt
12	Almuth **SCHULT**	(31) 09.02.91	Wolfsburg
21	Ann-Katrin **BERGER**	(31) 09.10.90	Chelsea (ENG)

DEFENDERS

2	Sophia **KLEINHERNE**	(22) 12.04.00	Eintracht Frankfurt
3	Kathrin **HENDRICH**	(30) 06.04.92	Wolfsburg
5	Marina **HEGERING**	(32) 17.04.90	Bayern Munich
15	Giulia **GWINN**	(23) 02.07.99	Bayern Munich
17	Felicitas **RAUCH**	(26) 30.04.96	Wolfsburg
23	Sara **DOORSOUN**	(30) 17.11.91	Eintracht Frankfurt

MIDFIELDERS

4	Lena **LATTWEIN**	(22) 02.05.00	Wolfsburg
6	Lena **OBERDORF**	(20) 19.12.01	Wolfsburg
8	Sydney **LOHMANN**	(22) 19.06.00	Bayern Munich
9	Svenja **HUTH**	(31) 25.01.91	Wolfsburg
13	Sara **DABRITZ**	(27) 15.02.95	Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)
16	Linda **DALLMANN**	(27) 02.09.94	Bayern Munich
20	Lina **MAGULL**	(27) 15.08.94	Bayern Munich
22	Jule **BRAND**	(19) 16.10.02	Hoffenheim

FORWARDS

7	Lea **SCHULLER**	(24) 12.11.97	Bayern Munich
10	Laura **FREIGANG**	(24) 01.02.98	Eintracht Frankfurt
11	Alexandra **POPP**	(31) 06.04.91	Wolfsburg
14	Nicole **ANYOMI**	(22) 10.02.00	Eintracht Frankfurt
18	Tabea **WASSMUTH**	(25) 26.08.96	Wolfsburg
19	Klara **BUHL**	(21) 07.12.00	Bayern Munich

COACH

Martina **VOSS-TECKLENBURG** (54) 22.12.67

ICELAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sandra **SIGURDARDOTTIR**	(35) 02.10.86	Valur
12	Telma **IVARSDOTTIR**	(23) 30.03.99	Breidablik
12	Iris Dogg **GUNNARSDOTTIR**	(32) 18.09.89	Throttur Reykjavik *
13	Audur **SVEINBJORNSDOTTIR**	(19) 12.08.02	UMF Afturelding

DEFENDERS

2	Sif **ATLADOTTIR**	(36) 15.07.85	Selfoss
3	Elisa **VIDARSDOTTIR**	(31) 26.05.91	Valur
4	Glodis Perla **VIGGOSDOTTIR**	(27) 27.06.95	Bayern Munich (GER)
6	Ingibjorg **SIGURDARDOTTIR**	(24) 07.10.97	Valerenga (NOR)
11	Hallbera Gudny **GISLADOTTIR**	(35) 14.09.86	IFK Kalmar (SWE)
18	Gudrun **ARNARDOTTIR**	(26) 29.07.95	Rosengard (SWE)
19	Aslaug Munda **GUNNLAUGSDOTTIR**	(21) 02.06.01	Breidablik
20	Gudny **ARNADOTTIR**	(21) 29.07.00	Milan (ITA)

MIDFIELDERS

5	Gunnhildur Yrsa **JONSDOTTIR**	(33) 28.09.88	Orlando Pride (USA)
7	Sara Bjork **GUNNARSDOTTIR**	(31) 29.09.90	Lyon (FRA)
8	Karolina Lea **VILHJALMSDOTTIR**	(20) 08.08.01	Bayern Munich (GER)
10	Dagny **BRYNJARSDOTTIR**	(30) 10.08.91	West Ham United (ENG)
14	Selma Sol **MAGNUSDOTTIR**	(24) 23.04.98	Rosenborg (NOR)
15	Alexandra **JOHANNSDOTTIR**	(22) 19.03.00	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)
17	Agla Maria **ALBERTSDOTTIR**	(22) 05.08.99	BK Hacken (SWE)
22	Amanda **ANDRADOTTIR**	(18) 18.12.03	Kristianstads DFF (SWE)

FORWARDS

9	Berglind Bjorg **THORVALDSDOTTIR**	(30) 18.01.92	SK Brann (NOR)
16	Elin Metta **JENSEN**	(27) 01.03.95	Valur
21	Svava Ros **GUDMUNDSDOTTIR**	(26) 11.11.95	SK Brann (NOR)
23	Sveindis Jane **JONSDOTTIR**	(21) 05.06.01	Wolfsburg (GER)

* Replaced IVARSDOTTIR during the tournament

COACH

Thorsteinn **HALLDORSSON** (54) 07.01.68

ITALY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Laura **GIULIANI**	(29) 06.06.93	Milan
12	Katja **SCHROFFENEGGER**	(31) 28.04.91	Fiorentina
22	Francesca **DURANTE**	(25) 12.02.97	Inter Milan

DEFENDERS

2	Valentina **BERGAMASCHI**	(25) 22.01.97	Milan
3	Sara **GAMA**	(33) 27.03.89	Juventus
5	Elena **LINARI**	(28) 15.04.94	Roma
13	Elisa **BARTOLI**	(31) 07.05.91	Roma
15	Maria Luisa **FILANGERI**	(22) 28.01.00	Sassuolo
16	Lucia **DI GUGLIELMO**	(25) 26.06.97	Roma
17	Lisa **BOATTIN**	(25) 03.05.97	Juventus
23	Martina **LENZINI**	(23) 23.07.98	Juventus

MIDFIELDERS

4	Aurora **GALLI**	(25) 13.12.96	Everton (ENG)
6	Manuela **GIUGLIANO**	(24) 18.08.97	Roma
7	Flaminia **SIMONETTI**	(25) 17.02.97	Inter Milan
8	Martina **ROSUCCI**	(30) 09.05.92	Juventus
18	Arianna **CARUSO**	(22) 06.11.99	Juventus
21	Valentina **CERNOIA**	(31) 22.06.91	Juventus

FORWARDS

9	Daniela **SABATINO**	(37) 26.06.85	Fiorentina
10	Cristiana **GIRELLI**	(32) 23.04.90	Juventus
11	Barbara **BONANSEA**	(31) 13.06.91	Juventus
14	Agnese **BONFANTINI**	(23) 04.07.99	Juventus
19	Valentina **GIACINTI**	(28) 02.01.94	Milan
20	Martina **PIEMONTE**	(24) 07.11.97	Milan

COACH

Milena **BERTOLINI**	(56) 24.06.66	

NETHERLANDS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Sari **VAN VEENENDAAL**	(32) 03.04.90	PSV
1	Jacintha **WEIMAR**	(24) 11.06.98	Feyenoord *
16	Daphne **VAN DOMSELAAR**	(22) 06.03.00	FC Twente
23	Barbara **LORSHEYD**	(31) 26.03.91	ADO Den Haag

DEFENDERS

2	Aniek **NOUWEN**	(23) 09.03.99	Chelsea (ENG)
3	Stefanie **VAN DER GRAGT**	(29) 16.08.92	Ajax
4	Merel **VAN DONGEN**	(29) 11.02.93	Atletico Madrid (ESP)
5	Lynn **WILMS**	(21) 03.10.00	Wolfsburg (GER)
15	Caitlin **DIJKSTRA**	(23) 30.01.99	FC Twente
18	Kerstin **CASPARIJ**	(21) 19.08.00	FC Twente
19	Marisa **OLISLAGERS**	(21) 09.09.00	FC Twente
20	Dominique **JANSSEN**	(27) 17.01.95	Wolfsburg (GER)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Jill **ROORD**	(25) 22.04.97	Wolfsburg (GER)
8	Sherida **SPITSE**	(32) 29.05.90	Ajax
10	Danielle **VAN DE DONK**	(30) 05.08.91	Lyon (FRA)
12	Victoria **PELOVA**	(23) 03.06.99	Ajax
14	Jackie **GROENEN**	(27) 17.12.94	Manchester United (ENG)
21	Damaris **EGURROLA**	(22) 26.08.99	Lyon (FRA)

FORWARDS

7	Lineth **BEERENSTEYN**	(25) 11.10.96	Bayern Munich (GER)
9	Vivianne **MIEDEMA**	(25) 15.07.96	Arsenal (ENG)
11	Lieke **MARTENS**	(29) 16.12.92	Barcelona (ESP)
13	Renate **JANSEN**	(31) 07.12.90	FC Twente
17	Romee **LEUCHTER**	(21) 12.01.01	Ajax
22	Esmee **BRUGTS**	(18) 28.07.03	PSV

* Replaced VAN VEENENDAAL during the tournament

COACH

Mark **PARSONS** (ENG)	(35) 06.08.86	

NORTHERN IRELAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jacqueline **BURNS**	(25) 06.03.97	BK Hacken (SWE)
12	Becky **FLAHERTY**	(24) 06.03.98	Brighouse Town (ENG)
23	Shannon **TURNER**	(24) 08.09.97	Wolverhampton Wanderers (ENG)

DEFENDERS

2	Rebecca **McKENNA**	(21) 13.04.01	Lewes (ENG)
3	Demi **VANCE**	(31) 02.05.91	Rangers (SCO)
4	Sarah **McFADDEN**	(35) 23.05.87	Durham (ENG)
5	Julie **NELSON**	(37) 04.06.85	Crusaders Strikers
6	Ashley **HUTTON**	(34) 02.11.87	Linfield
13	Kelsie **BURROWS**	(21) 22.02.01	Cliftonville
15	Rebecca **HOLLOWAY**	(26) 25.08.95	Racing Louisville (USA)
17	Laura **RAFFERTY**	(26) 29.04.96	Southampton (ENG)
22	Abbie **MAGEE**	(21) 15.11.00	Cliftonville

MIDFIELDERS

7	Chloe **McCARRON**	(24) 22.12.97	Glentoran
8	Marissa **CALLAGHAN**	(36) 02.09.85	Cliftonville
10	Rachel **FURNESS**	(34) 19.06.88	Liverpool (ENG)
16	Nadene **CALDWELL**	(31) 24.01.91	Glentoran
18	Louise **McDANIEL**	(22) 24.05.00	Cliftonville
20	Joely **ANDREWS**	(20) 20.04.02	Glentoran

FORWARDS

9	Simone **MAGILL**	(27) 01.11.94	Everton (ENG)
11	Kirsty **McGUINNESS**	(27) 04.11.94	Cliftonville
14	Lauren **WADE**	(28) 22.11.93	Glentoran
19	Emily **WILSON**	(20) 26.08.01	Crusaders Strikers
21	Caitlin **McGUINNESS**	(19) 30.08.02	Cliftonville

COACH

Kenny **SHIELS**	(66) 27.04.56	

NORWAY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Guro **PETTERSEN**	(30) 22.08.91	Valerenga
12	Sunniva **SKOGLUND**	(19) 07.07.02	Stabaek
23	Aurora **MIKALSEN**	(26) 21.03.96	SK Brann

DEFENDERS

2	Anja **SONSTEVOLD**	(30) 21.06.92	Inter Milan (ITA)
3	Maria **THORISDOTTIR**	(29) 05.06.93	Manchester United (ENG)
4	Tuva **HANSEN**	(24) 04.08.97	SK Brann
5	Guro **BERGSVAND**	(28) 03.03.94	SK Brann
6	Maren **MJELDE**	(32) 06.11.89	Chelsea (ENG)
17	Julie **BLAKSTAD**	(20) 27.08.01	Manchester City (ENG)
20	Synne Skinnes **HANSEN**	(26) 12.08.95	Rosenborg
21	Anna **JOSENDAL**	(21) 29.04.01	Rosenborg

MIDFIELDERS

7	Ingrid Syrstad **ENGEN**	(24) 29.04.98	Barcelona (ESP)
8	Vilde Boe **RISA**	(26) 13.07.95	Manchester United (ENG)
11	Guro **REITEN**	(27) 26.07.94	Chelsea (ENG)
15	Amalie **EIKELAND**	(26) 26.08.95	Reading (ENG)
16	Thea **BJELDE**	(22) 05.06.00	Valerenga
18	Frida **MAANUM**	(22) 16.07.99	Arsenal (ENG)
19	Elisabeth **TERLAND**	(21) 28.06.01	SK Brann

FORWARDS

9	Karina **SAEVIK**	(26) 24.03.96	Avaldsnes
10	Caroline Graham **HANSEN**	(27) 18.02.95	Barcelona (ESP)
13	Celin Bizet **ILDHUSOY**	(20) 23.10.01	Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)
14	Ada **HEGERBERG**	(26) 10.07.95	Lyon (FRA)
22	Sophie Roman **HAUG**	(23) 04.06.99	Roma (ITA)

COACH

Martin **SJOGREN** (SWE)	(45) 27.04.77	

PORTUGAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	Ines **PEREIRA**	(23) 26.05.99	Servette (SUI)
12	Patricia **MORAIS**	(30) 17.06.92	Braga
22	Rute **COSTA**	(28) 01.06.94	Benfica

DEFENDERS

2	Catarina **AMADO**	(22) 21.07.99	Benfica
3	Alicia **CORREIA**	(19) 29.04.03	Sporting CP
4	Silvia **REBELO**	(33) 20.05.89	Benfica
5	Joana **MARCHAO**	(25) 24.10.96	Sporting CP
15	Carole **COSTA**	(32) 03.05.90	Benfica
17	Lucia **ALVES**	(24) 22.10.97	Benfica
19	Diana **GOMES**	(23) 26.07.98	Braga

MIDFIELDERS

6	Suzane **PIRES**	(29) 17.08.92	Ferroviaria (BRA)
7	Vanessa **MARQUES**	(26) 12.04.96	Braga
8	Andreia **NORTON**	(25) 15.08.96	Benfica
11	Tatiana **PINTO**	(28) 28.03.94	Levante (ESP)
13	Fatima **PINTO**	(26) 16.01.96	Sporting CP
14	Dolores **SILVA**	(30) 07.08.91	Braga
20	Francisca **NAZARETH**	(19) 17.11.02	Benfica
21	Andreia **FARIA**	(22) 19.04.00	Benfica

FORWARDS

9	Ana **BORGES**	(32) 15.06.90	Sporting CP
10	Jessica **SILVA**	(27) 11.12.94	Benfica
16	Diana **SILVA**	(27) 04.06.95	Sporting CP
18	Carolina **MENDES**	(34) 27.11.87	Braga
23	Telma **ENCARNAÇAO**	(20) 11.10.01	Maritimo

COACH

Francisco **NETO**	(40) 11.07.81	

SPAIN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lola **GALLARDO**	(29) 10.06.93	Atletico Madrid
13	Sandra **PANOS**	(29) 04.11.92	Barcelona
23	Misa **RODRIGUEZ**	(22) 22.07.99	Real Madrid

DEFENDERS

2	Ona **BATLLE**	(23) 10.06.99	Manchester United (ENG)
3	Laia **ALEIXANDRI**	(21) 25.08.00	Atletico Madrid
4	Irene **PAREDES**	(31) 04.07.91	Barcelona
5	Ivana **ANDRES**	(27) 13.07.94	Real Madrid
15	Leila **OUAHABI**	(29) 22.03.93	Barcelona
16	Maria Pilar **LEON**	(27) 13.06.95	Barcelona
19	Olga **CARMONA**	(22) 12.06.00	Real Madrid
20	Andrea **PEREIRA**	(28) 19.09.93	Barcelona

MIDFIELDERS

6	Aitana **BONMATI**	(24) 18.01.98	Barcelona
7	Irene **GUERRERO**	(25) 12.12.96	Levante
8	Mariona **CALDENTEY**	(26) 19.03.96	Barcelona
12	Patricia **GUIJARRO**	(24) 17.05.98	Barcelona
18	Teresa **ABELLEIRA**	(22) 09.01.00	Real Madrid
21	Sheila **GARCIA**	(25) 15.03.97	Atletico Madrid

FORWARDS

9	Esther **GONZALEZ**	(29) 08.12.92	Real Madrid
10	Athenea **DEL CASTILLO**	(21) 24.10.00	Real Madrid
11	Marta **CARDONA**	(27) 26.05.95	Real Madrid
14	Amaiur **SARRIEGI**	(21) 13.12.00	Real Sociedad
17	Lucia **GARCIA**	(23) 14.07.98	Athletic Club
22	Claudia **PINA**	(20) 12.08.01	Barcelona

COACH

Jorge **VILDA**	(40) 07.07.81	

SWEEDEN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Hedvig **LINDAHL**	(39) 29.04.83	Atletico Madrid (ESP)
12	Jennifer **FALK**	(29) 26.04.93	BK Hacken
21	Zecira **MUSOVIC**	(26) 26.05.96	Chelsea (ENG)

DEFENDERS

2	Jonna **ANDERSSON**	(29) 02.01.93	Chelsea (ENG)
3	Linda **SEMBRANT**	(35) 15.05.87	Juventus (ITA)
4	Hanna **GLAS**	(29) 16.04.93	Bayern Munich (GER)
5	Amanda **NILDEN**	(23) 07.08.98	Juventus (ITA)
6	Magdalena **ERIKSSON**	(28) 08.09.93	Chelsea (ENG)
7	Emma **KULLBERG**	(30) 25.09.91	Brighton & Hove Albion (ENG)
13	Amanda **ILESTEDT**	(29) 17.01.93	Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)
14	Nathalie **BJORN**	(25) 04.05.97	Everton (ENG)

MIDFIELDERS

9	Kosovare **ASLLANI**	(32) 29.07.89	Real Madrid (ESP)
16	Filippa **ANGELDAHL**	(24) 14.07.97	Manchester City (ENG)
17	Caroline **SEGER**	(37) 19.03.85	Rosengard
20	Hanna **BENNISON**	(19) 16.10.02	Everton (ENG)
23	Elin **RUBENSSON**	(29) 11.05.93	BK Hacken

FORWARDS

8	Lina **HURTIG**	(26) 05.09.95	Juventus (ITA)
10	Sofia **JAKOBSSON**	(32) 23.04.90	San Diego Wave (USA)
11	Stina **BLACKSTENIUS**	(26) 05.02.96	Arsenal (ENG)
15	Rebecka **BLOMQVIST**	(24) 24.07.97	Wolfsburg (GER)
18	Fridolina **ROLFO**	(28) 24.11.93	Barcelona (ESP)
19	Johanna Rytting **KANERYD**	(25) 12.02.97	BK Hacken
22	Olivia **SCHOUGH**	(31) 11.03.91	Rosengard

COACH

Peter **GERHARDSSON**	(62) 22.08.59	

SWITZERLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gaelle **THALMANN**	(36) 18.01.86	Real Betis (ESP)
12	Livia **PENG**	(20) 14.03.02	FC Zurich
21	Seraina **FRIEDLI**	(29) 20.03.93	FC Aarau

DEFENDERS

2	Julia **STIERLI**	(25) 03.04.97	FC Zurich
3	Lara **MARTI**	(22) 21.09.99	Bayer Leverkusen (GER)
4	Rachel **RINAST**	(31) 02.06.91	Cologne (GER)
5	Noelle **MARITZ**	(26) 23.12.95	Arsenal (ENG)
14	Rahel **KIWIC**	(31) 05.01.91	FC Zurich
15	Luana **BUHLER**	(26) 28.04.96	Hoffenheim (GER)
18	Viola **CALLIGARIS**	(26) 17.03.96	Levante (ESP)
19	Eseosa **AIGBOGUN**	(29) 23.05.93	Paris FC (FRA)
22	Nadine **RIESEN**	(22) 11.04.00	FC Zurich

MIDFIELDERS

6	Geraldine **REUTELER**	(23) 21.04.99	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)
7	Riola **XHEMAILI**	(19) 05.03.03	Freiburg (GER)
8	Sandy **MAENDLY**	(34) 04.04.88	Servette
11	Coumba **SOW**	(27) 27.08.94	Paris FC (FRA)
13	Lia **WALTI**	(29) 19.04.93	Arsenal (ENG)
16	Sandrine **MAURON**	(25) 19.12.96	Eintracht Frankfurt (GER)

FORWARDS

9	Ana-Maria **CRNOGORCEVIC**	(31) 03.10.90	Barcelona (ESP)
10	Ramona **BACHMANN**	(31) 25.12.90	Paris Saint-Germain (FRA)
17	Svenja **FOLMLI**	(19) 19.08.02	Freiburg (GER)
20	Fabienne **HUMM**	(35) 20.12.86	FC Zurich
23	Meriame **TERCHOUN**	(26) 27.10.95	FC Zurich

COACH

Nils **NIELSEN** (DEN)	(50) 03.11.71	

(ages and clubs correct as of 06.07.22)

Internationals

2022 WOMEN'S EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Group A

Jul 6 – Manchester
England 1 (Mead 16)
Austria 0

Jul 7 – Southampton
Norway 4 (Blakstad 10, Maanum 13, Graham Hansen 31 pen, Reiten 54)
Northern Ireland 1 (Nelson 49)

Jul 11 – Southampton
Austria 2 (Schiechtl 19, Naschenweng 88)
Northern Ireland 0

Jul 11 – Brighton & Hove
England 8 (Stanway 12 pen, Hemp 15, White 29, 41, Mead 34, 38, 81, Russo 66)
Norway 0

Jul 15 – Southampton
Northern Ireland 0
England 5 (Kirby 40, Mead 44, Russo 48, 53, Burrows 76 og)

Jul 15 – Brighton & Hove
Austria 1 (Billa 37)
Norway 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England (Q)	3	3	0	0	14	0	9
Austria (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
Norway	3	1	0	2	4	10	3
Northern Ireland	3	0	0	3	1	11	0

Group B

Jul 8 – Milton Keynes
Spain 4 (Paredes 26, Bonmati 41, L. Garcia 75, Caldentey 90+5 pen)
Finland 1 (Sallstrom 1)

Jul 8 – London
Germany 4 (Magull 21, Schuller 57, Lattwein 78, Popp 86)
Denmark 0

Jul 12 – Milton Keynes
Denmark 1 (Harder 72)
Finland 0

Jul 12 – London
Germany 2 (Buhl 3, Popp 37)
Spain 0

Jul 16 – Milton Keynes
Finland 0
Germany 3 (Kleinherne 40, Popp 48, Anyomi 63)

Jul 16 – London
Denmark 0
Spain 1 (Cardona 90)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Spain (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Denmark	3	1	0	2	1	5	3
Finland	3	0	0	3	1	8	0

Group C

Jul 9 – Leigh
Portugal 2 (Gomes 58, J. Silva 65)
Switzerland 2 (Sow 2, Kiwic 5)

Jul 9 – Sheffield
Netherlands 1 (Roord 52)
Sweden 1 (Andersson 35)

Jul 13 – Sheffield
Sweden 2 (Rolfo 53, Bennison 79)
Switzerland 1 (Bachmann 55)

Jul 13 – Leigh
Netherlands 3 (Egurrola 7, Van der Gragt 16, Van de Donk 62)
Portugal 2 (C. Costa 38 pen, Di. Silva 47)

Jul 17 – Sheffield
Switzerland 1 (Reuteler 53)
Netherlands 4 (Crnogorcevic 49 og, Leuchter 84, 90+5, Pelova 89)

Jul 17 – Leigh
Sweden 5 (Angeldahl 21, 45, C. Costa 45+7 og, Asllani 54 pen, Blackstenius 90+1)
Portugal 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden (Q)	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Netherlands (Q)	3	2	1	0	8	4	7
Switzerland	3	0	1	2	4	8	1
Portugal	3	0	1	2	4	10	1

Group D

Jul 10 – Manchester
Belgium 1 (Vanhaevermaet 67 pen)
Iceland 1 (Thorvaldsson 50)

Jul 10 – Rotherham
France 5 (Geyoro 9, 40, 45, Katoto 12, Cascarino 38)
Italy 1 (Piemonte 76)

Jul 14 – Manchester
Italy 1 (Bergamaschi 62)
Iceland 1 (Vilhjalmsdottir 3)

Jul 14 – Rotherham
France 2 (Diani 6, Mbock Bathy 41)
Belgium 1 (Cayman 36)

Jul 18 – Rotherham
Iceland 1 (Brynjarsdottir 90+12 pen)
France 1 (Malard 1)

Jul 18 – Manchester
Italy 0
Belgium 1 (De Caigny 49)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France (Q)	3	2	1	0	8	3	7
Belgium (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Iceland	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
Italy	3	0	1	2	2	7	1

Quarter-Finals

Jul 20 – Brighton & Hove
England 2 (Toone 84, Stanway 96)
Spain 1 (Gonzalez 54)
After Extra-Time

Jul 21 – London
Germany 2 (Magull 25, Popp 90)
Austria 0

Jul 22 – Leigh
Sweden 1 (Sembrant 90+2)
Belgium 0

Jul 23 – Rotherham
France 1 (Perisset 102 pen)
Netherlands 0
After Extra-Time

Semi-Finals

Jul 26 – Sheffield
England 4 (Mead 34, Bronze 48, Russo 68, Kirby 76)
Sweden 0

Jul 27 – Milton Keynes
Germany 2 (Popp 40, 76)
France 1 (Frohms 44 og)

Final

Jul 31 – Wembley
England 2 (Toone 62, Kelly 110)
German 1 (Magull 79)
After Extra-Time

2022 COPA AMERICA FEMENINA

Group A

Jul 8 – Cali
Bolivia 1 (E. Salvatierra 59)
Ecuador 6 (Bolanos 19, 90+4, Pesantez 37, Aguirre 41, Lattanzio 70, Espinales 76)

Jul 8 – Cali
Colombia 4 (Montoya 22, 59, Ramirez 33, Vanegas 82)
Paraguay 2 (J. Martinez 27, Gauto 90)

Jul 11 – Cali
Paraguay 3 (Fernandez 3, J. Martinez 12, Sandoval 56)
Chile 2 (Pardo 34, Acuna 90+2)

Jul 11 – Cali
Bolivia 0
Colombia 3 (Santos 21, Morales 70 og, D. Arias 78)

Jul 14 – Cali
Paraguay 2 (R. Martinez 10, Fernandez 71)
Bolivia 0

Jul 14 – Cali
Chile 2 (Saez 40, Acuna 76)
Ecuador 1 (Aguirre 78)

Jul 17 – Cali
Chile 5 (Lara 7, 45+1, E. Salvatierra 14 og, Y. Lopez 17, Valencia 76)
Bolivia 0

Jul 17 – Cali
Ecuador 1 (Charcopa 34)
Colombia 2 (Ramirez 30, Caicedo 45)

Jul 20 – Cali
Colombia 4 (Usme 4, D. Arias 11, Vanegas 37, Salazar 41)
Chile 0

Jul 20 – Cali
Ecuador 1 (Real 45+1)
Paraguay 2 (J. Martinez 30, Chamorro 90+1)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colombia (Q)	4	4	0	0	13	3	12
Paraguay (Q)	4	3	0	1	9	7	9
Chile	4	2	0	2	9	8	6
Ecuador	4	1	0	3	9	7	3
Bolivia	4	0	0	4	1	16	0

Group B

Jul 9 – Armenia
Uruguay 0
Venezuela 1 (Castellanos 78)

Jul 9 – Armenia
Brazil 4 (Adriana 28, 58, Bia Zaneratto 36 pen, Debinha 87)
Argentina 0

Jul 12 – Armenia
Uruguay 0
Brazil 3 (Adriana 32, 48, Debinha 45+2)

Jul 12 – Armenia
Argentina 4 (Rodriguez 18, Bonsegundo 52, Stabile 62, Lonigro 84)
Peru 0

Jul 15 – Armenia
Argentina 5 (Banini 43, Rodriguez 51, 64, 69, Stabile 90+5)
Uruguay 0

Jul 15 – Armenia
Peru 0
Venezuela 2 (Castellanos 39, Altuve 64)

Jul 18 – Armenia
Venezuela 0
Brazil 4 (Bia Zaneratto 22, Ary Borges 51, Debinha 58, 65)

Jul 18 – Armenia
Peru 0
Uruguay 6 (Pa. Gonzalez 51, 76, Aquino 58, Pizarro 61, 89, Velazco 66)

Jul 21 – Armenia
Brazil 6 (Duda 1, Duda Sampaio 17, Geyse 41, Duda Santos 44 pen, Fe Palermo 48, Adriana 50 pen)
Peru 0

Jul 21 – Armenia
Venezuela 0
Argentina 1 (Bonsegundo 63)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil (Q)	4	4	0	0	17	0	12
Argentina (Q)	4	3	0	1	10	4	9
Venezuela	4	2	0	2	3	5	6
Uruguay	4	1	0	3	6	9	3
Peru	4	0	0	4	0	18	0

Fifth Place Match

Jul 24 – Armenia
Chile 1 (Zamora 65)
Venezuela 1 (Castellanos 90+2)
Chile win 4-2 on penalties

Semi-Finals

Jul 25 – Bucaramanga
Colombia 1 (Caicedo 63)
Argentina 0

Jul 26 – Bucaramanga
Brazil 2 (Ary Borges 16, Bia Zaneratto 28)
Paraguay 0

Third Place Match

Jul 24 – Armenia
Argentina 3 (Rodriguez 78, 90+1, Bonsegundo 90)
Paraguay 1 (Nunez 39 og)

Final

Jul 30 – Bucaramanga
Colombia 0
Brazil 1 (Debinha 39 pen)

• The CONMEBOL tournament also served as South America's qualifiers for the 2023 Women's World Cup, with Brazil, Colombia and Argentina qualifying for Australia and New Zealand, and Paraguay and Chile entering the inter-confederational play-offs

2022 WOMEN'S AFCON

Group A

Jul 2 – Rabat
Morocco 1 (Chebbak 29)
Burkina Faso 0

Jul 3 – Rabat
Senegal 2 (Diakhate 39 pen, N. Ndiaye 50)
Uganda 0

Jul 5 – Rabat
Burkina Faso 0
Senegal 1 (Fall 84 pen)

Jul 5 – Rabat
Uganda 1 (Komuntale 32)
Morocco 3 (Ayane 14 pen, El Chad 68, Chebbak 84 pen)

Jul 8 – Rabat
Morocco 1 (Chebbak 55 pen)
Senegal 0

Jul 8 – Casablanca
Burkina Faso 2 (Congo 35, Kabre 41)
Uganda 2 (Kunihira 8, Nabweteme 38)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco (Q)	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Senegal (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	1	6
Burkina Faso	3	0	1	2	2	4	1
Uganda	3	0	1	2	3	7	1

Group B

Jul 3 – Casablanca
Cameroon 0
Zambia 0

Jul 3 – Casablanca
Tunisia 4 (Houij 1, Ellouzi 12, 60, Amouklou 71 og)
Togo 1 (Gnintegma 22 pen)

Jul 6 – Casablanca
Zambia 1 (Chitundu 90+2)
Tunisia 0

Jul 6 – Casablanca
Togo 1 (Woedikou 28 pen)
Cameroon 1 (Johnson 38)

Jul 9 – Casablanca
Cameroon 2 (Abam 3, Nchout 90)
Tunisia 0

Jul 9 – Rabat
Zambia 4 (Chanda 15, 60, I. Lungu 21, Mapepa 41)
Togo 1 (Woedikou 35)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Cameroon (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Tunisia (Q)	3	1	0	2	4	4	3
Togo	3	0	1	2	3	9	1

Group C

Jul 4 – Rabat
Nigeria 1 (Ajibade 90+2)
South Africa 2 (Seoposenwe 61, Magaia 63)

Jul 4 – Rabat
Burundi 2 (Niyonkuru 52, 81)
Botswana 4 (Dithebe 43, Radiakanyo 47, Tholakele 55, 60)

Jul 7 – Rabat
South Africa 3 (Kgatlana 20, Motau 32, Motlhalo 54 pen)
Burundi 1 (Uwimana 30)

Jul 7 – Rabat
Botswana 0
Nigeria 2 (Onumonu 21, Ucheibe 48)

Jul 10 – Rabat
South Africa 1 (Majiya 80)
Botswana 0

Jul 10 – Rabat
Nigeria 4 (Ajibade 25 pen, Efih 28, Kanu 29, 46)
Burundi 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa (Q)	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Nigeria (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	2	6
Botswana (Q)	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Burundi	3	0	0	3	3	11	0

Quarter-Finals

Jul 13 – Casablanca
Zambia 1 (Chitundu 70)
Senegal 1 (N. Ndiaye 61)
After Extra-Time. Zambia win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 13 – Rabat
Morocco 2 (Mssoudy 3, Mrabet 59)
Botswana 1 (Dithebe 7)

Jul 14 – Casablanca
Cameroon 0
Nigeria 1 (Ajibade 56)

Jul 14 – Rabat
South Africa 1 (Seoposenwe 14)
Tunisia 0

Repechage

Jul 17 – Casablanca
Senegal 0
Tunisia 0
After Extra-Time. Senegal win 4-2 on penalties

Jul 17 – Rabat
Botswana 0
Cameroon 1 (Nchout 45+1)

Semi-Finals

Jul 18 – Casablanca
Zambia 0
South Africa 1 (Motlhalo 90+4 pen)

Jul 18 – Rabat
Morocco 1 (Mssoudy 66)
Nigeria 1 (Mrabet 62 og)
After Extra-Time. Morocco win 5-4 on penalties

Third Place Play-Off

Jul 22 – Casablanca
Nigeria 0
Zambia 1 (Nnadozie 29 og)

Final

Jul 23 – Rabat
Morocco 1 (Ayane 80)
South Africa 2 (Magaia 63, 71)

• The CAF tournament also served as Africa's qualifiers for the 2023 Women's World Cup, with South Africa, Morocco, Zambia and Nigeria qualifying for Australia and New Zealand, and Cameroon and Senegal entering the inter-confederational play-offs

2022 WOMEN'S CONCACAF CHAMPIONSHIP

Group A

Jul 4 – San Nicolas de los Garza
United States 3 (Morgan 16, 23, Purce 84)
Haiti 0

Jul 4 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Mexico 0
Jamaica 1 (Shaw 8)

Jul 7 – Guadalupe
Jamaica 0
United States 5 (Smith 5, 8, Lavelle 59, Mewis 83 pen, Rodman 86)

Jul 7 – Guadalupe
Haiti 3 (Borgella 14 pen, Mondesir 67 pen, Jeudy 78)
Mexico 0

Jul 11 – Guadalupe
Jamaica 4 (Carter 26, Shaw 58, 70 pen, Spence 79)
Haiti 0

Jul 11 – San Nicolas de los Garza
United States 1 (Mewis 89)
Mexico 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Jamaica (Q)	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Haiti	3	1	0	2	3	7	3
Mexico	3	0	0	3	0	5	0

Group B

Jul 5 – Guadalupe
Costa Rica 3 (R. Rodriguez 6, Salas 24, Alvarado 60 pen)
Panama 0

Jul 5 – Guadalupe
Canada 6 (Sinclair 27, Grosso 67, 79, Fleming 84, Beckie 86, Huitema 90+1)
Trinidad & Tobago 0

Jul 8 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Trinidad & Tobago 0
Costa Rica 4 (Granados 18, 44, Hutchinson 33 og, Alvarado 48)

Jul 8 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Panama 0
Canada 1 (Grosso 64)

Jul 11 – Guadalupe
Canada 2 (Fleming 5, Schmidt 69)
Costa Rica 0

Jul 11 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Panama 1 (Cox 43)
Trinidad & Tobago 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Canada (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Costa Rica (Q)	3	2	0	1	7	2	6
Panama	3	1	0	2	1	4	3
Trinidad & Tobago	3	0	0	3	0	11	0

Semi-Finals

Jul 14 – San Nicolas de los Garza
United States 3 (Sonnett 34, Pugh 45+3, Sanchez 90+5)
Costa Rica 0

Jul 14 – San Nicolas de los Garza
Canada 3 (Fleming 18, Chapman 64, Leon 76)
Jamaica 0

Third Place Play-Off

Jul 18 – Guadalupe
Costa Rica 0
Jamaica 1 (Van Zanten 102)
After Extra-Time

Final

Jul 18 – Guadalupe
United States 1 (Morgan 78 pen)
Canada 0

• The CONCACAF tournament also served as the region's qualifiers for the 2023 Women's World Cup, with United States, Canada, Jamaica and Costa Rica qualifying for Australia and New Zealand, and Haiti and Panama entering the inter-confederational play-offs

2022 OFC WOMEN'S NATIONS CUP

Group A

Jul 13 – Suva
Samoa 2 (Fischer 28, Stewart 70)
Tonga 0

Jul 16 – Suva
Tonga 1 (Swift 73)
Cook Islands 1 (Davison 49)

Jul 19 – Suva
Cook Islands 0
Samoa 1 (Stewart 14)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Samoa (Q)	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Cook Islands (Q)	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Tonga (Q)	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Group B

Jul 14 – Suva
Vanuatu 1 (Keletia 71)
Papua New Guinea 3 (Kaipu 34, Padio 76, Yanding 79)

Jul 17 – Suva
Papua New Guinea 2 (Padio 28 pen, Gunemba 83)
Tahiti 1 (Tamarii 90 pen)

Jul 20 – Suva
Tahiti 0
Vanuatu 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PNG (Q)	2	2	0	0	5	2	6
Tahiti (Q)	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Vanuatu	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Group C

Jul 14 – Suva
Solomon Islands 1 (Pegi 37 pen)
Fiji 1 (Kumar 22)

Jul 17 – Suva
Fiji 3 (Hussein 4, Diyalowai 45, 56)
New Caledonia 1 (Pahoa 90+1 pen)

Jul 20 – Suva
New Caledonia 2 (Neporo 73, 79)
Solomon Islands 2 (Gogoni 16, Maefiti 86)

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiji (Q)	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Solomon Islands (Q)	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
New Caledonia (Q)	2	0	1	1	3	5	1

Quarter-Finals

Jul 23 – Suva
Samoa 4 (Fischer 35, Stewart 51, 83, 90+5)
New Caledonia 2 (Uregei 45, 90)

Jul 23 – Suva
Papua New Guinea 3 (Padio 63, 99, Gunemba 70)
Tonga 3 (D. Vaka 29, Loto'aniu 44, 109)
AET. Papua New Guinea win 3-2 on penalties

Jul 24 – Suva
Fiji 2 (Diyalowai 22, Tamanitoakula 74)
Cook Islands 0

Jul 24 – Suva
Tahiti 0
Solomon Islands 1 (Maefiti 38)

Semi-Finals

Jul 27 – Suva
Samoa 0
Papua New Guinea 3 (Yanding 44, Gunemba 48, 78)

Jul 27 – Suva
Fiji 3 (Nasau 14, 28, Tamanitoakula 83)
Solomon Islands 1 (Pegi 11 pen)

Third Place Play-Off

Jul 30 – Suva
Samoa 1 (Fischer 16)
Solomon Islands 1 (David 40)
Solomon Islands win 6-5 on penalties

Final

Jul 30 – Suva
Papua New Guinea 2 (Gunemba 17, Padio 28)
Fiji 1 (Nasau 42)

• The OFC tournament also served as Oceania's qualifiers for the 2023 Women's World Cup, with Papua New Guinea entering the inter-confederational play-offs

2022 EAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

Jul 19 – Kashima
Japan 6 (Soma 2, 55, Machino 20, 57, Nishimura 22, 40)
Hong Kong 0

Jul 20 – Toyota
China 0
South Korea 3 (Zhu Chenjie 40 og, Kwon Chang-hoon 54, Cho Gue-sung 80)

Jul 24 – Toyota
South Korea 3 (Kang Seong-jin 17, 86, Hong Chul 74)
Hong Kong 0

Jul 24 – Toyota
Japan 0
China 0

Jul 27 – Toyota
China 1 (Tan Long 67)
Hong Kong 0

Jul 27 – Toyota
Japan 3 (Soma 49, Sasaki 64, Machino 72)
South Korea 0

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (C)	3	2	1	0	9	0	7
South Korea	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
China	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
Hong Kong	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

CHAN 2022 QUALIFIERS

Western Zone A

First Round

Jul 23-24: Liberia 0-3 Senegal; Sierra Leone 2-0 Cape Verde; Gambia 1-0 Guinea-Bissau
Jul 26-30: Senegal 1-2 Liberia (agg 4-2); Cape Verde 2-1 Sierra Leone (agg 2-3); Guinea-Bissau 1-0 Gambia (agg p1-1)

Second Round Draw

Aug 26-28: Senegal v Guinea; Sierra Leone v Mali; Guinea-Bissau v Mauritania
Sep 2-4: Guinea v Senegal; Mali v Sierra Leone; Mauritania v Guinea-Bissau

Western Zone B

First Round

Jul 24: Ghana 3-0 Benin
Jul 30: Benin 0-1 Ghana (agg 0-4)

Second Round Draw

Aug 26-28: Ivory Coast v Burkina Faso; Togo v Niger; Ghana v Nigeria
Sep 2-4: Burkina Faso v Ivory Coast; Niger v Togo; Nigeria v Ghana

Central Zone

First Round Draw

Aug 26-28: Central African Republic v Congo; Equatorial Guinea v Cameroon; Chad v Democratic Republic of Congo
Sep 2-4: Congo v Central African Republic; Cameroon v Equatorial Guinea; Democratic Republic of Congo v Chad
• *Gabon and Sao Tome e Principe did not enter*

Central-Eastern Zone

First Round

Jul 22-24: Ethiopia 0-0 South Sudan; Somalia 0-1 Tanzania; Burundi 2-1 Djibouti
Jul 28-30: South Sudan 0-5 Ethiopia (agg 0-5); Tanzania 2-1 Somalia (agg 3-1); Djibouti 2-1 Burundi (agg p3-3)
• *Eritrea and Kenya did not enter*

Second Round Draw

Aug 26-28: Ethiopia v Rwanda; Tanzania v Uganda; Djibouti v Sudan
Sep 2-4: Rwanda v Ethiopia; Uganda v Tanzania; Sudan v Djibouti

Southern Zone

First Round

Jul 22-24: Mauritius 0-2 Angola; Comoros 0-1 South Africa; Botswana 0-0 Eswatini; Seychelles 0-1 Madagascar; Mozambique 0-0 Zambia
Jul 29-31: Angola 1-0 Mauritius (agg 3-0); South Africa 0-0 Comoros (agg 1-0); Eswatini 2-2 Botswana (agg 2-2a); Madagascar 3-0 Seychelles (agg 4-0); Zambia 0-1 Mozambique (agg 0-1)
• *Malawi advanced with a walkover after their first round tie with Zimbabwe was cancelled. Namibia and Lesotho also did not enter*

Second Round Draw

Aug 26-28: Botswana v Madagascar; Angola v South Africa; Malawi v Mozambique
Sep 2-4: Madagascar v Botswana; South Africa v Angola; Mozambique v Malawi

Northern Zone

• *Algeria (as hosts), Libya and Morocco qualify automatically for the January 2023 tournament. Tunisia and Egypt did not enter*

Club football

EUROPE

2022 UEFA SUPER CUP

Aug 10 – Helsinki
Real Madrid 2 (Alaba 37, Benzema 65)
Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Real Madrid: Courtois – Carvajal (Rudiger 85), Militao, Alaba, Mendy, Modric (Rodrygo 66), Casemiro, Kroos (Tchouameni 85), Valverde (Camavinga 76, Benzema, Vinicius Junior (Ceballos 85).
Eintracht Frankfurt: Trapp, Toure (Alario 69), Tuta, Ndicka, Knauff, Rode (Gotze 58), Sow, Lenz, Lindstrom (Kolo Muani 58), Kamada, Santos Borre.

2022-23 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Second Qualifying Round

Jul 19-20: Midtjylland 1-1 AEK Larnaca; Pyunik 0-1 F91 Dudelange; Linfield 1-0 Bodo/Glimt; Zalgiris 1-0 Malmo; Ludogorets 3-0 Shamrock Rovers; Dinamo Zagreb 2-2 Shkupi; Qarabag 3-2 Zurich; Ferencvaros 1-2 Slovan Bratislava; HJK 1-2 Viktoria Plzen; Maribor 0-0 Sheriff Tiraspol; Maccabi Haifa 1-1 Olympiakos; Dynamo Kyiv 0-0 Fenerbahce
Jul 26-27: Shkupi 0-1 Dinamo Zagreb (agg 2-3); Viktoria Plzen 5-0 HJK (agg 7-1); Shamrock Rovers 2-1 Ludogorets (agg 2-4); Sheriff Tiraspol 1-0 Maribor (agg 1-0); F91 Dudelange 1-4 Pyunik (agg 2-4); AEK Larnaca 1-1 Midtjylland (agg 2-2p); Fenerbahce 1-2 Dynamo Kyiv (agg 1-2); Olympiakos 0-4 Maccabi Haifa (agg 1-5); Malmo 0-2 Zalgiris (agg 0-3); Bodo/Glimt 8-0 Linfield (agg 8-1); Zurich 2-2 Qarabag (agg 4-5); Slovan Bratislava 1-4 Ferencvaros (agg 3-5)

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 2-3: Ludogorets 1-2 Dinamo Zagreb; Sheriff Tiraspol 1-2 Viktoria Plzen; Monaco 1-1 PSV; Union Saint-Gilloise 2-0 Rangers; Benfica 4-1 Midtjylland; Maccabi Haifa 4-0 Apollon Limassol; Qarabag 1-1 Ferencvaros; Bodo/Glimt 5-0 Zalgiris; Red Star Belgrade 5-0 Pyunik; Dynamo Kyiv 1-0 Sturm Graz
Aug 9: Dinamo Zagreb 4-2 Ludogorets (agg 6-3); Viktoria Plzen 2-1 Sheriff Tiraspol (agg 4-2); PSV 3-2 Monaco (agg 4-3); Rangers 3-0 Union Saint-Gilloise (agg 3-2); Midtjylland 1-3 Benfica (agg 2-7); Apollon Limassol 2-0 Maccabi Haifa (agg 2-4); Ferencvaros 1-3 Qarabag (agg 2-4); Zalgiris 1-1 Bodo/Glimt (agg 1-6); Pyunik 0-2 Red Star Belgrade (agg 0-7); Sturm Graz 1-2 Dynamo Kyiv (agg 1-3)

Play-Off Round

Aug 16-17: Qarabag 0-0 Viktoria Plzen; Bodo/Glimt 1-0 Dinamo Zagreb; Maccabi Haifa 3-2 Red Star Belgrade; Copenhagen 2-1 Trabzonspor; Dynamo Kyiv 0-2 Benfica; Rangers 2-2 PSV
Aug 23-24: Viktoria Plzen 2-1 Qarabag (agg 2-1); Dinamo Zagreb 4-1 Bodo/Glimt (agg 4-2); Red Star Belgrade 2-2 Maccabi Haifa (agg 4-5); Trabzonspor 0-0 Copenhagen (agg 1-2); Benfica 3-0 Dynamo Kyiv (agg 5-0); PSV 0-1 Rangers (agg 2-3)

2022-23 UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 4: Malmo 3-0 F91 Dudelange; Shamrock Rovers 3-1 Shkupi; Linfield 0-2 Zurich; Olympiakos 1-1 Slovan Bratislava; Maribor 0-2 HJK; AEK Larnaca 2-1 Partizan Belgrade; Fenerbahce 3-0 Slovacko
Aug 9-11: F91 Dudelange 2-2 Malmo (agg 2-5); Shkupi 1-2 Shamrock Rovers (agg 2-5); Zurich 3-0 Linfield (agg 5-0); Slovan Bratislava 2-2 Olympiakos (agg 3-3p); HJK 1-0 Maribor (agg 3-0); Partizan Belgrade 2-2 AEK Larnaca (agg 3-4); Slovacko 1-1 Fenerbahce (agg 1-4)

Play-Off Round

Aug 18: Dnipro-1 1-2 AEK Larnaca; Gent 0-2 Omonia Nicosia; Austria Vienna 0-2 Fenerbahce; Zurich 2-1 Hearts; HJK 1-0 Silkeborg; Malmo 3-1 Sivasspor; Pyunik 0-0 Sheriff Tiraspol; Ludogorets 1-0 Zalgiris; Ferencvaros 4-0 Shamrock Rovers; Apollon Limassol 1-1 Olympiakos
Aug 25: AEK Larnaca 3-0 Dnipro-1 (agg 5-1); Omonia Nicosia 2-0 Gent (agg 4-0); Fenerbahce 4-1 Austria Vienna (agg 6-1); Hearts 0-1 Zurich (agg 1-3); Silkeborg 1-1 HJK (agg 1-2); Sivasspor 0-2 Malmo (agg 1-5); Sheriff Tiraspol 0-0 Pyunik (agg p0-0); Zalgiris 3-3 Ludogorets (agg 3-4aet); Shamrock Rovers 1-0 Ferencvaros (agg 1-4); Olympiakos 1-1 Apollon Limassol (agg p2-2)

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Arsenal, PSV, Bodo/Glimt, FC Zurich

Group B
Dynamo Kyiv, Rennes, Fenerbahce, AEK Larnaca

Group C
Roma, Ludogorets, Real Betis, HJK

Group D
Braga, Malmo, Union Berlin, Union Saint-Gilloise

Group E
Manchester United, Real Sociedad, Sheriff, Omonia

Group F
Lazio, Feyenoord, Midtjylland, Sturm Graz

Group G
Olympiakos, Qarabag, Freiburg, Nantes

Group H
Red Star Belgrade, Monaco, Ferencvaros, Trabzonspor

2022-23 UEFA EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Second Qualifying Round

Jul 19-21: Gzira United 2-2 Radnicki Nis; Aris 5-1 Gomel; Botev Plovdiv 0-0 APOEL; Fehervar 4-1 Gabala; Istanbul Basaksehir 1-1 Maccabi Netanya; Aris Limassol 2-0 Neftci Baku; Velez Mostar 0-1 Hamrun Spartans; Saburtalo Tbilisi 1-0 FCSB; Makedonija Gjorce Petrov 0-0 CSKA Sofia; Hapoel Be'er Sheva 2-1 Dinamo Minsk; Zira 0-3 Maccabi Tel Aviv; Vllaznia 1-1 Universitatea Craiova; Ararat-Armenia 0-0 Paide Linnameeskond; Kairat 0-1 Kisvarda; BATE Borisov 0-3 Konyaspor; Sepsi Sfantu Gheorghe 3-1 Olimpija Ljubljana; Kyzylzhar 1-2 Osijek; Liepaja 0-1 Young Boys; Rapid Vienna 0-0 Lechia Gdansk; SJK 0-1 Lillestrom; Breidbalik 2-0 Buducnost Podgorica; St Patrick's Athletic 1-1 Mura; St Joseph's 0-4 Slavia Prague; Spartak Trnava 4-1 Newtown; Sudava 0-1 Viborg; Vikingur 0-2 DAC; Pogon Szczecin 1-1 Brondby; AZ 1-0 Tuzla City; Motherwell 0-1 Sligo Rovers; Molde 4-1 Elfsborg; Koper 0-1 Vaduz; B36 Torshavn 1-0 Tre Fiori; Ruzomberok 0-3 Riga; Basel 2-0 Crusaders; Antwerp 0-0 Drita; Petrocub Hincesti 0-0 Laci; Racing Union 1-4 Cukaricki; Levski Sofia 2-0 PAOK; Vitoria Guimaraes 3-0 Puskas Akademia; Rijeka 1-2 Djurgardens; Vorskla Poltava 3-2 AIK; Valmiera 1-2 Shkendija; Rakow Czestochowa 5-0 Astana; KuPS 2-2 Milsami Orhei; Sparta Prague 0-0 Viking; La Fiorita 0-4 Ballkani; Vikingur Reykjavik 2-0 The New Saints; Sutjeska Niksic 0-0 KI; Hibernians 3-2 Levadia; Tirana 0-1 Zrinjski; Lech Poznan 5-0 Dinamo Batumi; CFR Cluj 3-0 Inter Club d'Escaldes; Tobol 2-0 Lincoln Red Imps
Jul 26-28: Radnicki Nis 3-3 Gzira United (agg 5-5p); Gomel 1-2 Aris (agg 2-7); APOEL 2-0 Botev Plovdiv (agg 2-0); Gabala 2-1 Fehervar (agg 3-5); Maccabi Netanya 0-1 Istanbul Basaksehir (agg 1-2); Neftci Baku 3-0 Aris Limassol (agg 3-2); Hamrun Spartans 1-0 Velez Mostar (agg 2-0); FCSB 4-2 Saburtalo Tbilisi (agg 4-3); CSKA Sofia 4-0 Makedonija Gjorce Petrov (agg 4-0); Dinamo Minsk 0-1 Hapoel Be'er Sheva (agg 1-3); Maccabi Tel Aviv 0-0 Zira (agg 3-0); Universitatea Craiova 3-0 Vllaznia (agg 4-1); Paide Linnameeskond 0-0 Ararat-Armenia (agg p0-0); Kisvarda 1-0 Kairat (agg 2-0); Konyaspor 2-0 BATE Borisov (agg 5-0); Olimpija Ljubljana 2-0 Sepsi Sfantu Gheorghe (agg 3-3p); Osijek 0-2 Kyzylzhar (agg 2-3); Young Boys 3-0 Liepaja (agg 4-0); Lechia Gdansk 1-2 Rapid Vienna (agg 1-2); Lillestrom 5-2 SJK (agg 6-2); Buducnost Podgorica 2-1 Breidbalik (agg 2-3); Mura 0-0 St Patrick's Athletic (agg 1-1p); Slavia Prague 7-0 St Joseph's (agg 11-0); Newtown 1-2 Spartak Trnava (agg 2-6); Viborg 1-0 Sudava (agg 2-0); DAC 2-0 Vikingur (agg 4-0); Brondby 4-0 Pogon Szczecin (agg 5-1); Tuzla City 0-4 AZ (agg 0-5); Sligo Rovers 2-0 Motherwell (agg 3-0); Elfsborg 1-2 Molde (agg 2-6); Vaduz 1-1 Koper (agg 2-1); Tre Fiori 0-0 B36 Torshavn (agg 0-1); Riga 2-1 Ruzomberok (agg 5-1); Crusaders 1-1 Basel (agg 1-3); Drita 0-2 Antwerp (agg 0-2); Laci 1-4 Petrocub Hincesti (agg 1-4); Cukaricki 4-0 Racing Union (agg 8-1); PAOK 1-1 Levski Sofia (agg 1-3); Puskas Akademia 0-0 Vitoria Guimaraes (agg 0-3); Djurgardens 2-0 Rijeka (agg 4-1); AIK 2-0 Vorskla Poltava (agg 4-3); Shkendija 3-1 Valmiera (agg 5-2); Astana 0-1 Rakow Czestochowa (agg 0-6); Milsami Orhei 1-4 KuPS (agg 3-6); Viking 2-1 Sparta Prague (agg 2-1); Ballkani 6-0 La Fiorita (agg 10-0); The New Saints 0-0 Vikingur Reykjavik (agg 0-2); KI 1-0 Sutjeska Niksic (agg 1-0); Levadia 1-1 Hibernians (agg 3-4); Zrinjski 3-2 Tirana (agg 4-2); Dinamo Batumi 1-1 Lech Poznan (agg 1-6); Inter Club d'Escaldes 1-1 CFR Cluj (agg 1-4); Lincoln Red Imps 0-1 Tobol (agg 0-3)

Third Qualifying Round

Aug 4: Spartak Trnava 0-2 Rakow Czestochowa; AIK 1-1 Shkendija; Viking 5-1 Sligo Rovers; Breidbalik 1-3 Istanbul Basaksehir; KuPS 0-2 Young Boys; Paide Linnameeskond 0-2 Anderlecht; Viborg 3-0 B36 Torshavn; Hajduk Split 3-1 Vitoria Guimaraes; Brondby 1-0 Basel; Lillestrom 1-3 Antwerp; CSKA Sofia 0-1 St Patrick's Athletic; Dundee United 1-0 AZ; APOEL 1-0 Kyzylzhar; DAC 0-1 FCSB; Riga 1-1 Gil Vicente; Wolfsberger 0-0 Gzira United; Maccabi Tel Aviv 2-0 Aris; Molde 3-0 Kisvarda; Neftci Baku 2-1 Rapid Vienna; Lugano 0-2 Hapoel Be'er Sheva; Hamrun Spartans 0-1 Levski Sofia; Cukaricki 1-3 Twente; Zorya Luhansk 1-0 Universitatea Craiova; Vaduz 1-1 Konyaspor; Sepsi Sfantu Gheorghe 1-3 Djurgardens; Fehervar 5-0 Petrocub Hincesti; Slavia Prague 2-0 Panathinaikos; Vikingur Reykjavik 1-0 Lech Poznan; RFS 1-1 Hibernians; Ballkani 3-2 KI; Zrinjski 1-0 Tobol; Shakhtyor Soligorsk 0-0 CFR Cluj
Aug 9-11: Rakow Czestochowa 1-0 Spartak Trnava (agg 3-0); Shkendija 1-1 AIK (agg 2-2p); Sligo Rovers 1-0 Viking (agg 2-5); Istanbul Basaksehir 3-0 Breidbalik (agg 6-1); Young Boys 3-0 KuPS (agg 5-0); Anderlecht 3-0 Paide Linnameeskond (agg 5-0); B36 Torshavn 1-2 Viborg (agg 1-5); Vitoria Guimaraes 1-0 Hajduk Split (agg 2-3); Basel 2-1 Brondby (agg p2-2); Antwerp 2-0 Lillestrom (agg 5-1); St Patrick's Athletic 0-2 CSKA Sofia (agg 1-2); AZ 7-0 Dundee United (agg 7-1); Kyzylzhar 0-0 APOEL (agg 0-1); FCSB 1-0 DAC (agg 2-0); Gil Vicente 4-0 Riga (agg 5-1); Gzira United 0-4 Wolfsberger (agg 0-4); Aris 2-1 Maccabi Tel Aviv (agg 2-3); Kisvarda 2-1 Molde (agg 2-4); Rapid Vienna 2-0 Neftci Baku (agg 3-2); Hapoel Be'er Sheva 3-1 Lugano (agg 5-1); Levski Sofia 1-2 Hamrun Spartans (agg 2-2p); Twente 4-1 Cukaricki (agg 7-2); Universitatea Craiova 3-0 Zorya Luhansk (agg 3-1); Konyaspor 2-4 Vaduz (agg 2-5); Djurgardens 3-1 Sepsi Sfantu Gheorghe (agg 6-2); Petrocub Hincesti 1-2 Fehervar (agg 1-7); Panathinaikos 1-1 Slavia Prague (agg 1-3); Lech Poznan 4-1 Vikingur Reykjavik (agg 4-2); Hibernians 1-3 RFS (agg 2-4); KI 2-1 Ballkani (agg 4-4p); Tobol 1-1 Zrinjski (agg 1-2); CFR Cluj 1-0 Shakhtyor Soligorsk (agg 1-0)

Play-Off Round

Aug 17-18: Djurgardens 3-0 APOEL; Maribor 0-0 CFR Cluj; RFS 2-2 Linfield; Lech Poznan 2-0 F91 Dudelange; Shkupi 1-2 Ballkani; Zrinjski 1-0 Slovan Bratislava; CSKA Sofia 1-0 Basel; Vaduz 1-1 Rapid Vienna; Rakow Czestochowa 2-1 Slavia Prague; Maccabi Tel Aviv 1-0 Nice; Universitatea Craiova 1-1 Hapoel Be'er Sheva; Fiorentina 2-1 Twente; Villarreal 4-2 Hajduk Split; Cologne 1-2 Fehervar; West Ham 3-1 Viborg; Istanbul Basaksehir 1-1 Antwerp; FCSB 1-2 Viking; Partizan Belgrade 4-1 Hamrun Spartans; Young Boys 0-1 Anderlecht; Slovacko 3-0 AIK; Molde 0-1 Wolfsberger; AZ 4-0 Gil Vicente
Aug 23-25: APOEL 3-2 Djurgardens (agg 3-5); CFR Cluj 1-0 Maribor (agg 1-0); Linfield 1-1 RFS (agg 3-3p); F91 Dudelange 1-1 Lech Poznan (agg 1-3); Ballkani 1-0 Shkupi (agg 3-1); Slovan Bratislava 2-1 Zrinjski (agg p2-2); Basel 2-0 CSKA

Sofia (agg 2-1); Rapid Vienna 0-1 Vaduz (agg 1-2); Slavia Prague 2-0 Rakow Czestochowa (agg 3-2); Nice 2-0 Maccabi Tel Aviv (agg 2-1); Hapoel Be'er Sheva 1-1 Universitatea Craiova (agg p1-1); Twente 0-0 Fiorentina (agg 1-2); Hajduk Split 0-2 Villarreal (agg 2-6); Fehervar 0-3 Cologne (agg 2-4); Viborg 0-3 West Ham (agg 1-6); Antwerp 1-3 Istanbul Basaksehir (agg 2-4); Viking 1-3 FCSB (agg 3-4); Hamrun Spartans 3-3 Partizan Belgrade (agg 4-7); Anderlecht 0-1 Young Boys (agg p1-1); AIK 0-1 Slovacko (agg 0-4); Wolfsberger 0-4 Molde (agg 1-4); Gil Vicente 1-2 AZ (agg 1-6)

Group Stage Draw

Group A
Istanbul Basaksehir, Fiorentina, Hearts, RFS

Group B
West Ham, FCSB, Anderlecht, Silkeborg

Group C
Villarreal, Hapoel Be'er-Sheva, Austria Vienna, Lech Poznan

Group D
Partizan Belgrade, Cologne, Nice, Slovacko

Group E
AZ, Apollon Limassol, Vaduz, Dnipro-1

Group F
Gent, Molde, Shamrock Rovers, Djurgarden

Group G
Slavia Prague, CFR Cluj, Sivasspor, Ballkani

Group H
Basel, Slovan Bratislava, Zalgiris, Pyunik

AFRICA

Final Tables 2021-22

All concluded domestic leagues. Champions (C), relegated (R) and progressed to the next stage (Q)

DR CONGO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe (C)	19	16	3	0	40	3	51
Vita Club	19	15	3	1	44	13	48
Saint Eloi Lupopo	19	14	4	1	32	9	46
Maniema Union	18	11	5	2	28	10	38
Don Bosco	19	8	8	3	20	15	32
Groupe Bazano	19	9	5	5	24	16	32
Motema Pembe	18	8	5	5	23	14	29
Rangers	19	8	4	7	18	19	28
Panda B52	19	6	6	7	17	19	24
Dauphins Noirs	19	7	2	10	15	20	23
Etoile de Kivu	19	5	7	7	13	15	22
Lubumbashi Sport	19	6	4	9	19	23	22
Sanga Balende	19	5	6	8	17	25	21
Blessing	19	4	7	8	13	16	19
Kuya Sport	19	4	7	8	18	28	19
Renaissance (R)	19	4	6	9	17	27	18
Tshinkunku (R)	19	2	9	8	11	26	15
Simba (R)	19	3	5	11	10	29	14
JSK (R)	19	2	2	15	6	36	8
RCK (R)	19	1	4	14	10	32	7

GABON

Regular Season Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASO Stade Mandji (Q)	12	8	3	1	18	6	27
Pelican (Q)	12	5	3	4	15	10	18
FC 105 (Q)	12	4	5	3	11	11	17
Bouenguidi	12	4	4	4	13	12	16
US Oyem	12	3	7	2	12	11	16
Mounana	12	3	5	4	7	10	14
Stade Migoveen (R)	12	0	3	9	2	18	3

Regular Season Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bitam (Q)	12	7	5	0	17	4	26
Mangasport (Q)	12	5	6	1	12	4	21
Dikaki (Q)	12	5	4	3	7	5	19
Cercle Mberi	12	3	5	4	16	9	14
Missile	12	2	7	3	7	15	13
Lozo	12	2	5	5	9	15	11
Akanda (R)	12	0	4	8	5	21	4

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASO Stade Mandji (C)	5	4	1	0	5	1	13
Mangasport	5	2	3	0	4	2	9
Pelican	5	2	0	3	4	5	6
Bitam	5	1	2	2	2	3	5
FC 105	5	1	1	3	5	7	4
Dikaki	5	0	3	2	2	4	3

GAMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hawks (C)	30	19	5	6	38	17	62
Real de Banjul	30	15	9	6	49	23	54
Steve Biko	30	12	10	8	27	26	46
Wallidan	30	11	11	8	22	22	44
Brikama United	30	9	12	9	28	23	39
Team Rhino	30	8	15	7	22	21	39
Waa Banjul	30	7	17	6	23	22	38
Marimoo	30	8	13	8	20	20	37
Armed Forces	30	8	12	10	33	35	36
Banjul	30	8	12	10	23	30	36
Samger	30	9	9	12	21	29	36
Falcons	30	8	11	11	36	40	35
Fortune (R)	30	9	8	13	26	36	35
GAMTEL (R)	30	9	7	14	32	32	34
GPA (R)	30	8	9	13	20	32	30
Elite United (R)	30	7	10	13	23	32	28

LIBYA

Regular Season Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli Benghazi (Q)	18	14	2	2	27	7	44
Al Nasr (Q)	18	11	4	3	35	14	37
Al Akhdar (Q)	18	10	6	2	37	14	36
Al Hilal	18	5	7	6	13	15	22
Al Sadaqa	18	5	6	7	14	20	21
Al Ta'awon	18	5	5	8	23	22	20
Al Tahaddi	18	4	5	9	17	28	17
Darnes	18	3	7	8	14	23	16
Shabaab Al Jabal*	18	4	4	10	15	34	16
Khaleej Sart (R)	18	2	8	8	20	38	14

Enter the relegation play-off

Regular Season Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli Tripoli (Q)	18	9	7	2	23	9	34
Al Ittihad (Q)	18	9	5	4	22	13	32
Olympic Azzaweya (Q)	18	8	6	4	19	18	30
Asswehly	18	7	7	4	24	15	28
Al Ittihad Misurata	18	6	8	4	18	13	26
Almahalla	18	5	8	5	23	19	23
Al Madina	18	4	9	5	15	18	21
Abu Salim	18	4	8	6	9	18	20
Al Khmes*	18	3	8	7	14	18	17
Aschat (R)	18	0	4	14	5	31	4

Enter the relegation play-off

Championship Round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli Tripoli (Q)	5	3	2	0	6	2	11
Al Ittihad (Q)	5	3	2	0	6	2	11
Al Akhdar	5	3	0	2	9	6	9
Al Nasr	5	1	1	3	4	7	4
Al Ahli Benghazi	5	1	1	3	2	5	4
Olympic Azzaweya	5	1	0	4	1	6	3

Final

Jul 31: Al Ittihad 2-1 Al Ahli Tripoli

MALI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Djoliba (C)	34	17	11	6	44	20	62
Bakaridjan	34	14	12	8	39	29	54
USC Kita	34	12	18	4	34	28	54
Stade Malien Bamako	34	15	8	11	38	25	53
Real Bamako	34	11	15	8	25	16	48
ASKO	34	12	12	10	32	28	48
Afrique Football Elite	34	11	15	8	29	27	48
Onze Createurs	34	10	16	8	32	23	46
COB	34	11	13	10	27	25	46
USFAS Bamako	34	11	13	10	26	30	46
Police	34	10	15	9	29	30	45
Yeelen Olympique	34	10	14	10	31	29	44
LC Ba	34	11	11	12	33	35	44
Black Stars	34	12	8	14	24	29	44
Duguwolofila (R)	34	10	12	12	33	39	42
US Bougouba (R)	34	10	7	17	38	46	37
ASOM (R)	34	3	14	17	17	44	23
Douannes de Sikasso (R)	34	3	12	19	16	44	21

NIGERIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rivers United (C)	38	23	8	7	58	24	77
Plateau United	38	21	4	13	50	29	67
Remo Stars	38	18	8	12	43	26	62
Kwara United	38	17	7	14	43	45	58
Enugu Rangers	38	15	11	12	41	30	56
Nasarawa United	38	15	8	15	42	48	53
Enyimba	38	15	7	16	39	36	52
Gombe United	38	14	10	14	39	39	52
Akwa United	38	13	13	12	35	36	52
Wikki Tourist	38	15	7	16	34	35	52
Sunshine Stars	38	14	9	15	30	30	51
Niger Tornadoes	38	15	6	17	32	38	51
Abia Warriors	38	13	11	14	50	44	50
Dakkada	38	15	4	19	42	49	49
Lobi Stars	38	14	7	17	36	48	49
Shooting Stars	38	12	12	14	41	45	48
Katsina United (R)	38	15	3	20	34	42	48
Heartland (R)	38	13	8	17	32	48	47
Kano Pillars (R)	38	15	6	17	32	36	45
MFM (R)	38	9	9	20	26	51	36

SUDAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal Omdurman (C)	30	24	5	1	59	13	77
Al Merreikh	30	22	8	0	56	11	74
Al Hilal Port Sudan	30	13	9	8	42	31	48
Al Ahly Shendi	30	12	6	12	26	27	42
Hilal El-Fasher	30	10	10	10	27	28	40
Al Ahli Khartoum	30	11	7	12	22	24	40
Kober	30	9	10	11	29	32	37
Wad Nubawi	30	8	12	10	23	29	36
Al Ahly Merowe	30	8	11	11	34	40	35
Hay Al Arab	30	7	13	10	18	21	34
Hay Al Wadi	30	8	10	12	23	30	34
Tuti	30	8	10	12	21	29	34
Alamal Atbara	30	7	12	11	22	35	33
Al Shorta*	30	8	8	14	27	37	32
Hilal Obayed (R)	30	8	5	17	23	39	29
Al Khartoum (R)	30	5	8	17	32	58	23

Enter the relegation play-off

ASIA

2022 AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

East Region

Last 16

Aug 18 – Saitama
Daegu FC 1 (Zeca 56)
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors 2 (Song 46, Kim 120)
AET

Aug 18 – Saitama
Vissel Kobe 3 (Lino 7, Sasaki 31 pen, Oda 80)
Yokohama F. Marinos 2 (Nishimura 9, Anderson Lopes 89)

Aug 19 – Saitama
BG Pathum United 4 (Kanitsribumphen 34, Ikhsan 39, Dangda 68, Tongkiri 87)
Kitchee 0

Aug 19 – Saitama
Johor Darul Ta'zim 0
Urawa Red Diamonds 5 (Scholz 8 pen, Moberg Karlsson 19, 39, Junker 84, 90)

Quarter-Finals

Aug 22 – Saitama
Vissel Kobe 1 (Yuruki 64)
Jeonbuk Motors 3 (Barrow 66, Gustavo 104, Moon 120)
AET

Aug 22 – Saitama
Urawa Red Diamonds 4 (Moberg Karlsson 32, Iwanami 42, Koizumi 65, Akimoto 72)
BG Pathum United 0

Semi-Finals

Aug 25 – Saitama
Jeonbuk Motors 2 (Paik 55 pen, Han 116)
Urawa Reds 2 (Matsuo 11, Junker 120)
AET; Urawa Red Diamonds win on penalties

West Region

Last 16 Draw

Feb 3-4: Al Hilal v Shabab Al Ahli; Al Shabab v Nasaf Qarshi; Al Duhail v Al Rayyan; Al Faisaly v Foolad

The winners of the East and West Regions will meet in the AFC Champions League final over two legs on February 19-26, 2023

2022 AFC CUP

ASEAN Zone

Semi-Finals

Aug 9-10: PSM Makassar 2-1 Kedah Darul Aman; Viettel 0-0p Kuala Lumpur City

Final

Aug 24: Kuala Lumpur City 5-2 PSM Makassar

Central Asia Zone

Final

Aug 17: Khujand 0-4 Sogdiana Jizzakh

West Asia Zone

Semi-Final Draw

Sep 5-6: Al Arabi v Al Seeb; East Riffa v Al Riffa

Final

Oct 4: Al Arabi or Al Seeb v East Riffa or Al Riffa

Inter-Zone Play-Offs

Semi-Final Draw

Sep 6-7: Eastern v Sogdiana Jizzakh; ATK Mohun Bagan v Kuala Lumpur City

Final

Oct 5: Inter-zone play-off semi-final winners

Final

Oct 22: Inter-zone play-off final winners v West Asia zone final winners

Final Tables 2021-22

MACAU

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chao Pak Kei (C)	15	15	0	0	86	4	45
Monte Carlo	14	11	0	3	70	13	33
Benfica de Macau	14	10	2	2	49	8	32
Cheng Fung	15	7	1	7	34	23	22
Ka I	15	5	3	7	23	42	18
Lun Lok	16	5	3	8	19	45	18
CFB Macau	14	2	5	7	11	53	11
Sporting de Macau	14	1	5	8	8	33	8
Casa de Portugal (R)	15	0	1	14	5	84	1
Policia* (R)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Withdrew

MALDIVES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maziya (C)	21	20	0	1	85	5	60
Eagles	21	15	1	5	38	28	46
Valencia	21	10	2	9	29	39	32
Green Streets	21	9	3	9	31	35	30
TC Sports Club	21	8	4	9	27	30	28
United Victory	21	7	5	9	26	39	26
Super United Sports	21	4	3	14	22	48	15
Da Grande	21	1	2	18	16	50	5

CONCACAF

2022 CONCACAF LEAGUE

Preliminary Round

Jul 26-28: Waterhouse 0-0 Pacific FC; Aguila 1-1 Alajuelense; Verdes 0-0 Platense; Malacateco 1-1 Sporting San Miguelito; Real Esteli 0-0 Real Espana; Atletico Vega Real 0-4 Municipal
Aug 2-4: Alajuelense 3-0 Aguila (agg 4-1); Pacific FC 6-0 Waterhouse (agg 6-0); Platense 2-2 Verdes (agg 2-2a); Sporting San Miguelito 3-0 Malacateco (agg 4-1); Real Espana 3-1 Real Esteli (agg 3-1); Municipal 5-0 Atletico Vega Real (agg 9-0)

Last 16

Aug 16-18: Sporting San Miguelito 0-1 Tauro; Comunicaciones 0-1 Diriangen; Cibao 0-1 Motagua; Municipal 2-2 Olimpia; Pacific FC 0-1 Herediano; Real Espana 2-0 Cartagines; Alajuelense 5-0 Alianza Panama; Verdes 0-2 Alianza San Salvador
Aug 23-25: Tauro 1-1 Sporting San Miguelito (agg 2-1); Diriangen 1-1 Comunicaciones (agg 2-1); Motagua 2-0 Cibao (agg 3-0); Olimpia 1-0 Municipal (agg 3-2); Herediano 0-1 Pacific FC (agg p1-1); Cartagines 0-2 Real Espana (agg 0-4); Alianza Panama 1-1 Alajuelense (agg 6-1); Alianza San Salvador 5-1 Verdes (agg 7-1)

Quarter-Final Draw

Sep 6-8: Motagua v Tauro; Diriangen v Olimpia; Real Espana v Herediano; Alianza v Alajuelense
Sep 13-15: Tauro v Motagua; Olimpia v Diriangen; Herediano v Real Espana; Alajuelense v Alianza

2022 CARIBBEAN CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

Group A

May 13: Cibao 3-0 Violette
May 15: Violette 3-2 Cavalier
May 17: Cibao 3-3 Cavalier

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cibao (Q)	2	1	1	0	6	3	4
Violette (Q)	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
Cavalier	2	0	1	1	5	6	1

Group B

May 13: Atletico Vega Real 2-1 Arcahaie
May 15: Arcahaie 0-2 Waterhouse
May 17: Atletico Vega Real 0-0 Waterhouse

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Waterhouse (Q)	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Atl Vega Real (Q)	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Arcahaie	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

Semi-Finals

May 19: Cibao 1-0 Atletico Vega Real; Waterhouse 1-3 Violette

Third Play Play-Off

May 22: Atletico Vega Real p1-1 Waterhouse

Final

May 22: Cibao 0-0p Violette

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Regular Season

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cibao*	14	9	3	2	26	14	30
Jarabacoa*	14	7	5	2	20	10	26
Moca*	14	6	6	2	22	17	24
Universidad O&M*	14	6	5	3	19	13	23
Vega Real*	14	5	4	5	15	15	19
Atletico Pantoja*	14	5	2	7	20	20	17
San Cristobal	14	1	4	9	11	26	7
Delfines Del Este	14	1	3	10	9	27	6

*Qualify for the championship round

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

Clausura

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SWA Sharks (Q)	10	8	1	1	35	12	25
Blue Hills (Q)	10	8	0	2	27	9	24
Teachers	10	4	1	5	21	17	13
Academy Eagles	10	3	4	3	20	17	13
Beaches	9	1	2	6	6	26	5
Flamingo	9	0	2	7	11	39	2

Final

Jul 11: Blue Hills 2-4 SWA Sharks

2022 CANADIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Preliminary Round

May 10-11: Guelph United 0-2 HFX Wanderers; Atletico Ottawa 1–1p York United; Cavalry FC 2–1 FC Edmonton; Forge FC 2–0 Mont-Royal Outremont; Vancouver Whitecaps 2–0 Valour FC

Quarter-Finals

May 24-25: HFX Wanderers 1–2 Toronto FC; Pacific FC 2–2p York United; CF Montreal 3–0 Forge FC; Cavalry FC 1–1p Vancouver Whitecaps

Semi-Finals

Jun 22: Toronto FC 4–0 CF Montreal; Vancouver Whitecaps 2–1 York United

Final

Jul 26: Vancouver Whitecaps p1–1 Toronto FC

SOUTH AMERICA

2022 COPA LIBERTADORES

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 2 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians 0
Flamengo 2 (De Arrascaeta 37, Gabriel Barbosa 51)

Aug 3 – Buenos Aires
Velez Sarsfield 3 (Janson 5, 73, Fernandez 90)
Tallares 2 (Santos 81, Garro 87)

Aug 3 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro 2 (Hulk 45+1 pen, Murilo 47 og)
Palmeiras 2 (Murilo 59, Danilo 90+2)

Aug 4 – Curitiba
Athletico Paranaense 0
Estudiantes 0

Quarter-Finals – 2nd Leg

Aug 9 – Rio deJaneiro
Flamengo 1 (Pedro 52)
Corinthians 0
Flamengo win 3-0 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Cordoba
Tallares 0
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Fernandez 79)
Velez Sarsfield win 4-2 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 0
Atletico Mineiro 0
2-2 on aggregate. Palmeiras win 6-5 on penalties

Aug 11 – La Plata
Estudiantes 0
Athletico Paranaense 1 (Vitor Roque 90+6)
Athletico Paranaense win 1-0 on aggregate

2022 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Quarter-Finals – 1st Leg

Aug 2 – San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira 0
Independiente del Valle 1 (Angulo 3)

Aug 2 – Montevideo
Nacional 0
Atletico Goianiense 1 (Luiz Fernando 23)

Aug 3 – Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 1 (Nikao 70)
Ceara 0

Aug 4 – Arequipa
Melgar 0
Internacional 0

Quarter-Finals – 2nd Leg

Aug 9 – Quito
Independiente del Valle 4 (Chavez 32, Sornoza 45+5 pen, Diaz 64, Faravelli 81 pen)
Deportivo Tachira 1 (Hernandez 26)
Independiente del Valle win 5-1 on aggregate

Aug 9 – Goiania
Atletico Goianiense 3 (Luiz Fernando 5, 53, Baralhas 45+1)
Nacional 0
Atletico Goianiense win 4-0 on aggregate

Aug 10 – Fotaleza
Ceara 2 (Mendoza 44, Castilho 63)
Sao Paulo 1 (Igor Vinicius 53)
2-2 on aggregate. Sao Paulo win 4-3 on penalties

Aug 11 – Porto Alegre
Internacional 0
Melgar 0
0-0 on aggregate. Melgar win 3-1 on penalties

URUGUAY

Torneo Intermedio Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (Q)	7	4	2	1	11	6	14
Wanderers	7	4	2	1	11	7	14
Penarol	7	3	2	2	12	8	11
Albion	7	3	2	2	7	7	11
City Torque	7	3	1	3	10	8	10
Fenix	7	2	3	2	4	5	9
Deportivo Maldonado	7	1	3	3	8	12	6
Rentistas	7	0	1	6	3	13	1

Torneo Intermedio Serie B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool (Q)	7	4	2	1	11	6	14
Nacional (Q)	7	6	1	0	15	1	19
Boston River	7	4	1	2	8	5	13
Defensor Sporting	7	4	1	2	10	8	13
River Plate	7	2	3	2	7	6	9
Cerro Largo	7	2	3	2	4	4	9
Plaza Colonia	7	2	2	3	6	7	8
Danubio	7	2	1	4	6	9	7
Cerrito	7	0	0	7	1	17	0

Final

Jul 27: Liverpool 0-1 Nacional

OCEANIA

2022 OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Aug 4: Galaxy 2-2 Lae City; Central Coast 0-3 Venus
Aug 7: Central Coast 3-1 Galaxy; Venus 1-0 Lae City
Aug 10: Lae City 2-3 Central Coast; Venus 0-1 Galaxy

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Venus (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Central Coast (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	6	6
Galaxy	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Lae City	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Group B

Aug 5: Auckland City 5-0 Hienghene Sport; Rewa 3-1 Nikao Sokattack
Aug 6: Rewa 0-3 Auckland City; Nikao Sokattack 0-1 Hienghene Sport
Aug 11: Hienghene Sport 2-0 Rewa; Nikao Sokattack 1-4 Auckland City

Final standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland (Q)	3	3	0	0	12	1	9
Hienghene (Q)	3	2	0	1	3	5	6
Rewa	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
N. Sokattack	3	0	0	3	2	8	0

Semi-Finals

Aug 14: Venus 4-0 Hienghene Sport; Auckland City 2-0 Central Coast

Final

Aug 17: Venus 0-3 Auckland City

TAHITI

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pirae (C)	22	18	2	2	95	14	77
Dragon	22	17	3	2	114	24	76
Venus	22	17	3	2	98	19	76
Tefana	22	14	5	3	71	27	69
Punaruu	22	10	3	9	40	38	54
Central	22	10	2	10	44	50	54
AS Pueu	22	9	1	12	50	48	50
Temanava	22	7	1	14	45	68	42
Olympic Mahina	22	6	1	15	31	86	41
Tahiti	22	6	2	14	29	54	40
Excelsior*	22	4	1	17	30	96	35
AS Mataiea (R)	22	1	0	21	23	146	24

*Enter the relegation play-off

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Ledley King

Chelsea 1 Tottenham 2

2008 League Cup final, Wembley

In 2008, Ledley King captained Tottenham Hotspur to the Carling Cup – their only trophy win in the last 23 years...

"I had been at Tottenham since the age of 14 and I knew what winning a trophy would mean to the fans. As is the case again now, those supporters waited too long to win something and their desperation adds pressure when you are going into a final. Those games are rare opportunities to do something that will be remembered for a long time.

That day, against a very good Chelsea team, we made it happen.

Juande Ramos was our manager at the time and he took the players away for a few days to get ready for the match. We could all feel the tension around the club as the final got closer because you don't get too many chances like that in your career. We wanted to do everything possible to take it.

That break really worked. We were a group that got along and being away from the bubble at the training ground gave us a chance to relax and come into the game feeling fresh.

The key for me in these big cup finals is belief. When you are up against a top side like Chelsea that are used to winning things, you know they are going to believe they can win the game. John Terry was their captain, they had Frank Lampard in midfield and Didier Drogba up front. These were all players who had already won a lot at Chelsea and, for us, this was our chance to win a first trophy. So they probably had the psychological edge in that respect, but we had the hunger and desire to get the job done.

Importantly, we also had the belief that we needed to win the game.

That was vital when Drogba scored the first goal. In the past, that would have been the beginning of the end for Spurs against Chelsea because we had a terrible record against them. But I could feel in the dressing room at half-time that it might be different this time and we had players who could turn it around. We got a penalty, Dimitar Berbatov scored and then it was game on.

Coming from behind to beat that Chelsea team was no easy task and Jonathan Woodgate scored the goal that won it.

It was my special moment. I'd watched a lot of great Spurs captains dream about lifting a trophy for the club at Wembley and not make it, so for me to do it meant that's the one day I will remember as my best in the game.

The last few years have shown how difficult it is because Tottenham have not won a trophy since, and that's too long a wait for a club of our size.

Spurs skipper... King in action at Wembley

"I'd watched a lot of great Spurs captains dream about lifting a trophy for the club at Wembley"

Winners...Ledley lifts the trophy

I firmly believe that Antonio Conte can end that wait this season, but a lot of Spurs players and managers have said that over the last few years and haven't backed it up. That needs to change and hopefully Conte is the manager to do it."

Interview by Kevin Palmer

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